

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Offutt sergeant named best in Air National Guard

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nebraska Air National Guard sergeant serving at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., as part of the 170th Group was recently named the Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for the entire Air National Guard.

“There are still days when it

doesn’t seem like I can grasp the whole concept of being named one of the top senior NCOs in the entire Air National Guard,” said Master Sgt. Tyrone F. Bingham, a native of Hopkinsville, Ky., who is currently finishing off the final days of a 120-day deployment to an undisclosed overseas location.

In being named the Air Na-
See NCO on 20.

Guard recruiters break records in February

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Even the gloomy clouds of a national economic slowdown have tiny, often unexpected silver linings.

In the Nebraska National Guard’s case, the current recession may have indirectly contributed to the Guard setting its largest monthly recruiting figures in approximately four to five decades.

In February the Nebraska Army National Guard enlisted

a total of 85 new Soldiers, easily the greatest monthly increase since “sometime during the Vietnam War.”

For the Nebraska Air National Guard, 25 new Airmen enlisted in February, bringing the organization to a total of 1,042 members—107.1 percent of its current authorized strength.

That’s a growth of 30 since the start of the current fiscal year last October.

“We’re off to our best start ever,” said Lt. Col. Jim Mur-
See RECRUITING on 7

March seminar helps prepare Guardsmen for future

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The world is changing.

In mid-March, 30 Nebraska National Guardsmen attended a three-day seminar designed to give them the tools they need to successfully meet those changes.

Called the “Diversity Champions Course,” the seminar was sponsored by the Air National

Guard as part of a national effort to prepare Guardsmen to effectively manage the challenges that a changing world is bringing with it.

“I believe that it’s a leadership course maybe more than a diversity course,” said Chief Master Sgt. Bob Huttes, a Nebraska Air National Guard state human resources advisor for Joint Force Headquarters, Nebraska.

Huttes said along with study-

ing how to make more effective teams out of groups of people with diverse backgrounds and personal beliefs, the Diversity Champions Course is designed to give people more insight into their own personal lives, beliefs and values.

“It’s an impactful course that can change your life,” said Huttes. “It makes you assess where you are at in your life and how you handle situations...to

expand where you are today...to expand it where you maybe take more chances with your life and maybe handle situations better.”

Huttes said Air Guard officials first became aware of the course approximately three years ago. After investigating it further, they decided to encourage the various wings throughout the Air Guard to host courses at their local installations.

See DIVERSITY on 15.

Moroccan immigrant becomes Nebraska Guard’s first language and cultural specialist

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For the past 12 months, 1st Lt. Juan Vidal has had one of the toughest jobs in the Nebraska Army National Guard.

As the Nebraska Army National Guard’s “Language and Cultural Specialist Program” officer-in-charge, Vidal is responsible for finding people in Omaha and the surrounding area who are fluent in Arabic, Persian or Pushtu and getting them interested in joining the Guard to serve as translators and cultural advisors in such places as Iraq and Afghanistan.

“It is very difficult because the (Arabic-speaking) community is very tight due to their cultural differences,” said Vidal from his Mercy Road Armory office in Omaha. “It’s tough...very tough.”

In the end, however, Vidal didn’t have to find the person he was looking for to break the ice in Omaha.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Army Proud: Spc. Najib Aitmassaoud poses next to a recruiting poster in the Omaha Mercy Road armory. Aitmassaoud recently became the Nebraska Army Guard’s first recruit under the “Language and Cultural Specialist Program.”

That person came looking for him.

Najib Aitmassaoud, 31, recently became the first Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier to graduate from basic and advanced individual training under the Guard’s “Language and Cultural Specialist Program.” He is now at Camp Shelby, Miss., training with a National Guard brigade for a future deployment to Iraq.

See CULTURAL ADVISOR on 14.

Soldier dies after collapsing while exercising at Camp Ashland

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A newly enlisted Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier died Feb. 27 in Omaha after passing out while participating in a supervised cool down exercise at Camp Ashland, Neb.

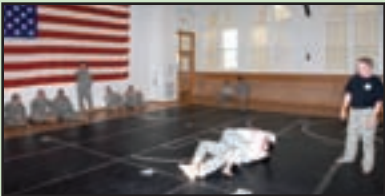
Pvt. James K. Treacle, 24, of Lexington, Neb., was a member of Lexington’s Detachment 1, 1195th Transportation Company. He was training at Camp Ashland, Neb., as part of the Recruit Sustainment Pro-
See DEATH on 4.



Treacle

To Be The Best...

Combative Match: Nebraska Army Guard sergeants watch as a pair of noncommissioned officers battle each other during the Best Warrior Competition’s combative tournament, March 20.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Eyes Front: Staff Sgt. David Dooley, Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company, carefully aims a claymore mine while competing in the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition, March 20, at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Guard Soldiers compete for state’s Best Warrior titles

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For the second-straight year, the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition went down to the final moments of an exhausting two-day contest that had taxed its competitors mentally and physically multiple times.

“Going into that last competition – the sergeants major board – only one point separated the top three in the Noncommissioned Officer Category and the Enlisted Category was still close enough that if the top Soldier would’ve had problems, the second-place Soldier would’ve been right there to pass him up,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, state command sergeant major for the Nebraska Army National Guard, shortly after announcing the 2009 winners.

This year’s Best Warrior Competition was held at Camp Ashland and at the Greenleaf Training Site near Hastings, Neb. It was a multiple discipline competition designed to find the state’s top enlisted Soldier and ser-
See BEST WARRIORS on 12.

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NEWS DIGEST

■**Iraq drawdown decision process included military commanders, Gates says**

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) — President Barack Obama’s decision to redeploy all U.S. combat troops out of Iraq by the end of August next year emerged from a process that included input from military commanders and senior defense leaders, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Feb. 27.

The president made his decision after in-depth talks with commanders on the ground and in Washington, Gates told the Pentagon press corps via telephone from Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The timeline takes into consideration Multinational Force Iraq Commander Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno’s concern about security during district and sub-district elections scheduled for the summer and another national election at the end of the year.

Odierno wanted to ensure enough U.S. troops remained to help the Iraqis and still allow time to redeploy the combat brigades, Gates said, noting that an earlier drawdown would pose some “significant logistical and security issues.” At the end of August 2010, all U.S. combat forces will be out of Iraq, but this does not mean all forces will leave.

Between 35,000 and 50,000 Americans will remain in country to train and mentor the Iraqi forces or track down extremist groups in conjunction with Iraqi forces.

The president will be flexible and reserves the right to make changes, Gates said. “He clearly does not anticipate having to do that,” he added. “He has balanced the risks of staying longer or coming out sooner.”

All those involved with the discussion believe U.S. forces will meet the president’s timeline, the secretary said. Under the terms of the U.S.-Iraq status-of-forces agreement, all American forces must be out of the country by the end of 2011.

■**Troops scheduled to get 2.9 percent pay raise under president’s budget plan**

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — President Barack Obama’s fiscal 2010 budget proposal includes a 2.9 percent pay increase for U.S. servicemembers.

The figure is lower than pay raises requested the past two years, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Feb. 27. But he noted that Congress has a precedent of increasing the amount initially requested.

“Two years ago, we went to the Hill with about the same request; it was 3 percent. And last year, we went with a

request for 3.5 percent,” Gates told reporters at a Pentagon news conference.

“In both cases, the Congress added to it.”

Gates cited the “constrained economic environment” for the smaller proposed pay raise, but said the request is “not all that different from what we submitted in the past.”

The bump in pay is part of the Defense Department’s \$534 billion base operating budget for fiscal 2010, which represents a 4 percent, or \$20 billion, increase from the previous fiscal year.

Gates expressed confidence that the department’s budget share will be enough to sustain its requirements, including personnel needs.

“I’m confident that this funding level will allow the department to meet its long-term institutional priorities of taking care of the troops and their families, rebalancing our capabilities for conventional and irregular warfare, completing the growth of the Army and Marine Corps and preserving essential modernization programs,” he said.

■**Wyatt names new Air Guard deputy director**

ARLINGTON, Va. (NGBNEWS) — A new deputy director of the Air National Guard was announced by Lt. Gen. Bud Wyatt, the director of the Air National Guard today.

Maj. Gen. Patrick J. Moisia, an Arizona Guardsman, will succeed Brig. Gen. Stanley Clarke III, who took a position as the military assistant to the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Plans and Programs last year.

“I look forward to working with Maj. Gen. Moisia,” Wyatt said. “He brings extensive field experience and QDR expertise that will benefit the Air National Guard, the U.S. Air Force and our nation.”

He will assist Wyatt in formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, plans and programs affecting more than 106,000 Air Guard members serving in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

■**U.S., Great Britain share common goals in Afghanistan, Obama says**

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — As the United States conducts a comprehensive review of its Afghanistan strategy, President Barack Obama said March 2 he’s confident Great Britain will remain its strongest partner in putting that strategy into effect.

“Both Great Britain and the United States share a deep interest in ensuring that neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan

Defense Department to allow photos of returning caskets with family’s permission

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — The Defense Department will allow the news media to photograph the flag-draped caskets of fallen U.S. troops returning home if their families agree, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Feb. 26.

The announcement authorizes family members to choose whether to allow media access to the homecomings at Dover Air Force Base, Del., reversing a long-standing policy barring the press.

“I have decided that the decision regarding media coverage of the dignified transfer process at Dover should be made by those most directly affected – on an individual basis – by the families of the fallen,” Gates said at a Pentagon news conference.

“We ought not to presume to make that decision in their place,” added Gates, who began reviewing the policy at the request of President Barack Obama

The Defense Department’s choice to shift course was informed by sources that include the military services and groups that represent military families, the secretary said. But the issue created divisions within the department, Gates said, adding that he was rebuffed when he broached the topic last year, before reaching out more broadly during the most recent policy

review.

“I had asked about changing the policy in Dover over a year ago and, although when I got the response that I did – which recommended no change – I accepted that at the time,” he said. “I must say I was never comfortable with it.”

The secretary has appointed a group to quickly develop a plan to implement the policy, which reverses the restriction put in place by President George H.W. Bush in 1991. Under the blanket restriction, the media has been barred from photographing the flag-draped caskets of about 3,850 U.S. service members killed in action since 2001.

“I have tasked the working group to examine ways in which we might further assist the families of those who have made the supreme sacrifice for our country,” Gates said.

He added that he expects the group to work under “short deadlines.”

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreed that military families deserve foremost consideration in dealing with such issues.

“We’ve seen so many families go through so much, and in that, they have been extraordinarily strong,” Mullen told reporters. “And meeting their needs, their requests in the most dignified, respectful, focused way we can was very much a driver for me in supporting this change.”

Armed Forces Day event at Mahoney State Park cancelled

■**Continuing economic recession claims May 16 park event designed to honor Nebraska’s military members, vets, families**

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The continuing economic recession claimed an event designed to honor Nebraska’s current military members, veterans and their families when organizers were forced to cancel the “Armed Forces Day Salute to Nebraska’s Military” scheduled for May 16 at Mahoney State Park.

An e-mail sent out by the event organizers said that the current economy had a direct effect on the decision.

“The current economy severely hampered fund raising efforts for the event. To continue forward would place the financial future of the sponsoring Nebraska National Guard Association

in jeopardy and force budget cuts to the event that would compromise the quality of the event for you and your family.”

The event was originally to have included a number of activities and displays including youth fishing instruction, archery range, BB gun range, pony rides, paddle boats climbing walls, informational exhibits, the Army Guard “Patriot Chopper,” NASCAR Car #88, educational exhibits and an evening barbecue. The event would have also included concerts throughout the day.

Organizers say the cancellation only applies to the event activities.

Mahoney State Park will still be open and normal park activities will still be available. May 16 is the annual free park entry and free fishing day.

Officials said VA Nebraska and Western Iowa are still planning to conduct their 2nd Annual Welcome Home Event for Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom veterans and their families at Mahoney State Park, May 16.

The event will include informational booths, job fair and children’s activities.

are safe havens for terrorist activity,” the president said during a joint news conference with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Brown is the first European leader to visit the White House since Obama took office.

While the session focused largely on the global economic crisis, Obama and Brown also discussed Iran’s nuclear program, global warming and the war in Afghanistan. Obama conceded that “the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated,” and that al-Qaida safe havens remain in Pakistan’s frontier regions.

■**Today’s National Guard needs full spectrum of capabilities, general says**

BALTIMORE, Md. (AFPS) — Living up to the National Guard’s motto of “Always Ready, Always There” requires a full spectrum of capabilities, a senior National Guard official told an audience at the Domestic Operations Conference, March 3.

“How do you take things that work in our community and make them sustaining programs of record? That’s the challenge,” said Maj. Gen. Peter M. Aylward, director of the National Guard Bureau Joint Staff.

In addition to its traditional role responding to natural disasters, the Guard must be flexible enough to respond to threats such as weapons of mass destruction. And being flexible, he added,

is key to fighting an enemy that fights unconventionally.

“The rules we use are written in black and white,” Aylward said. “Our adversaries are not governed by those black-and-white rules. They hide in shades of gray.”

He added the Guard’s Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen are uniquely suited for any mission. Depending on the threat, he said, Guardsmen can ratchet up their readiness from traditional duty to being called up by their state and, if necessary, being federally activated.

Guardsmen from California, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana and Texas shared experiences during recent state call-ups with their counterparts at the conference.

“The people of this nation depend on the Guard to help them, no matter what,” said Maj. Gen. Stephen F. Villacorta, the U.S. Northern Command liaison to the chief of the National Guard Bureau.

Northcom’s main area of responsibility, he said, is the continental United States, and coordination with state and local authorities as well as the National Guard is essential for success.

“This coordination occurs every day,” he said, “and with respect to Northcom, National Guard Bureau and the states, has significantly increased over the past two years.”

Villacorta said this partnership will continue to grow. “Northcom is seeking to expand its partnership with NGB and the states to make our job easier when it comes time to respond to an event,” he said.

Prairie Soldier

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The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

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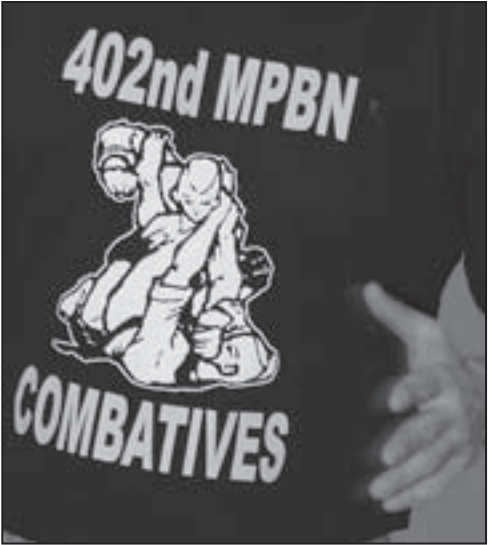
Nebraska Air National Guard

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Master Sgt. Alan Brown	Master Sgt. Kevin Nye	Senior Airman James Lieth



Going Head-To-Head: Sgt. William Sis and Spc. Jon Johnson attempt to subdue Capt. Jeffrey Boyden with a grappling hold during the 402nd Military Police Battalion's February drill.

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon



Blackshirts: The 402nd Military Police Battalion's combative instructors were identified by a distinctive black t-shirt. The trainers were responsible for training the Soldiers on a variety of combative techniques designed to subdue unruly prisoners.

Hand-to-Hand TRAINING

■Omaha Soldiers practice combative skills during January drill weekend exercise

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Staff Photojournalist

As an internment and resettlement organization, the 402nd Military Police Battalion from Omaha, Neb., could deal with some unsavory individuals. Deployed, members of the 402nd MP Bn. could be responsible for processing military and civilian prisoners for internment. That means that at some point each and every member of the organization could come face-to-face with unpredictable prisoners. Because of that, the responsibility for maintaining control of those prisoners so that they don't hurt themselves or others rests with every Soldier, not just the organization's assigned military policemen. In order to prepare the organization for the challenges the Soldiers could someday face, leaders of the 402nd MP Bn. recently conducted a ground combative training course, Feb. 8, at the North Omaha Readiness Center. "Our job is to house and maintain prisoners in an internment and resettlement environment, so we're face-to-face with the enemy," said Capt. Jeffery Boyden, commander of 402nd MP Bn. "In our battalion we don't know when or where the enemy or the prisoner might jump over the desk and grab someone. So everybody has to have at least a common knowledge of some ground fighting skills." According to Boyden, the February training was designed to give the Soldiers some basic instructions and experience in the combative arts, beginning with instruction on specific

moves and techniques designed to subdue an individual with minimum injury to either the Soldier or assailant. "We showed them how to do some kicks to the common peroneal (nerve) and some front kicks. And then we got into some of the control mechanisms," said Boyden. Soldiers were also trained on pressure point control techniques. The training culminated with a scenario in which instructors, acting as prisoners, were escorted through a series of simulated rooms to mimic the in-processing procedures they might encounter in a deployed situation. The instructor would then decide to either comply with the Soldiers or become aggressive, giving Soldiers an opportunity to react. "When prisoners come in they have to go through different stages and they are face-to-face with the medical staff, they are face-to-face with the (Human Resources) guy and they could elect to jump over the desk and start engaging," said Boyden. It was then the responsibility of the Soldiers to react appropriately. Boyden said the combative training is intended to illustrate how important it is to maintain control of the prisoner at all times. "The first goal is to de-escalate the situation. We don't want to have to fight," said Boyden. "We don't want to go there, but if we have to, then we want to prepare our (Soldiers) so they can handle it." According to the Soldiers involved in the training, the exercise was extremely valuable. "This is important for us to do because the prisoners can get physical at any time," said



Classroom Instructions: Command Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Hall, 402nd Military Police Battalion command sergeant major, instructs members of his organization on the importance of restraint when handling prisoners. Soldiers were cautioned to only use their combative skills as a last resort in a self-defense situation.

Staff Sgt. Mellisa Larson, a unit supply sergeant. "Today I actually felt like I learned a lot...I felt like after this training I knew enough to where I could maintain control of the situation." "It was good practice and I learned a couple new techniques from some of the MPs that have more training than I do," said Sgt. Karl Girard, a military police trainee. Throughout the training, battalion instructors constantly worked to drive home the point that the use of physical force should only be used as a last resort. "Regardless of your (military occupational specialty), you are a Soldier first. You're a warrior first, and you need to be able to defend yourself," said Boyden. "Our intent is not to make fighters. It is to basically give people the combative skills



Teamwork: Sgt. Ryan York (left) and Sgt. Jeffrey Wagner attempt to grapple Capt. Jeffrey Boyden off of his feet during the Feb. 8 training at the North Omaha Readiness Center. Members of the 402nd Military Police Battalion were preparing for their upcoming annual training by conducting a variety combative training designed to help them prepare for a variety of possibilities.

they need if they are attacked." Though valuable, the combative training also proved enjoyable. "It was tons of fun," said Larson. "I loved it, and it was good training. I learned a lot."

Air Guard engineers preparing for upcoming deployment

By 1st Lt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

The members of the 155th Civil Engineering Squadron aren't taking a break after completing the Operational Readiness Inspection in January; instead, they are using the ORI as a starting point for their deployment overseas to support efforts in Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

Over 30 personnel from many different sections of the 155th CES are receiving training and preparing their families for the long separation the deployment will bring in the summer and fall of this year.

"I want to have them (the squadron) prepared better than when we got deployed the first time," said Chief Master Sgt. Alan G. Maier, 155th CES.

In order to do that, Maier said he is preparing his organiza-

tion's families and members by giving them more information and training before they deploy, which will help them with the demobilization transition once they get home.

This includes legal and financial briefings and contacting Karen Jordan-Anderson of the Airmen and Family Readiness Center on base.

"I want my members to start thinking about 'What do I need to do financially? What do I need to do for my family?... What do I need to do to prep,'" said Maier.

Maier also had Dr. Ahsan Naseem, a psychologist from the Department of Veteran's Affairs Lincoln Campus, come to speak to the Air Guardsmen in his squadron about how to cope with deployments before, during and after the mission is over.

That was Dr. Naseem's first visit to address 155th Air Refueling members going overseas.

Personally, Maier has been

working with his extended family and friends to create a support group for his wife and children while he's gone.

"I'm lucky to have my siblings within the Lincoln area," Maier said, adding that he's also letting various organizations he belongs to know that his family will need someone to call on for things such as home repair, auto repair and emotional support while he's gone. This includes his children's support network as well.

"My son has some other friends that their fathers have been gone for a year, so he has somebody that he can talk to that's in the same boat," said Maier.

He also has made sure his wife has contacted Military One Source to access the resources they have for families.

This isn't Maier's first deployment, but he is making sure that those who are deploying for the first time get the support and

training they need. This includes such Guardsmen as Senior Airman Tyler Kathol from Hartington, Neb.

Kathol has been in the Air National Guard for four years and this will be his first deployment overseas.

"It's kinda exciting. I'm kinda nervous too," said Kathol, who will graduate this summer from Northeast Community College with a degree in Building Construction. He said his new degree fits in well with what he does for the Air National Guard and what he will do during the deployment.

"(My family) knew this would happen. We're just all trying to go with the flow," said Kathol, adding that he's working on keeping his family informed and up to date on what to expect.

Kathol is also getting hints and tips from those who have deployed before to get an idea of what kind of work he might be doing and what he might expect

for lodging and meals.

Some of the preparations for the ORI helped the deployers get ready for this mobilization.

"It put our (Personal Readiness Folders) and a lot of our paperwork in perfect order and that I'm finding out is a big help," said Master Sgt. David J. Wieting, Prime Beef manager for 155th CES.

"All of our mobility paperwork is already done because of the ORI and that is a good thing."

One of Wieting's jobs as Prime Beef manager is ensuring that everyone who is deploying has the correct equipment and that it is paid for by the correct operation. This has been a challenge in the past.

"I'm getting good help from (supply), (personel), and (logistics readiness.) Deb Barnett in (supply) and Trish Petersen in (personnel), and Mike Akin in LGRR have become very good friends of mine," said Wieting.

Guard, Reserves break ground on Beatrice center

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in Beatrice, March 9, to kick off the construction of a new combined Armed Forces Readiness Center located on land just north of Southeast Community College.

Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, city officials and construction managers manned the silver ceremonial shovels to break ground for the \$10 million project that is expected to be completed in the spring of 2010.

"We are extremely glad to be here in Beatrice and happy to be part of the Beatrice community. We think this will show how much we think of Beatrice with the quality of this facility," said Kadavy.

"We are committed to world class facilities for our Army National Guard and I will speak on behalf of the Army Reserve also when I say that," he added.

The new 60,000-square-foot readiness center will replace current Army Guard armories in Beatrice and Fairbury, and a similar U.S. Army Reserve facility in Wymore. These facilities were closed by the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC) of 2005.

The new readiness center will be located across the street from the current Nebraska Army National Guard armory, which is located at 210 South Reed Street.

"This is a great day for Beatrice. We have had a long and we believe good relationship with the National Guard predating World War II. We are proud to have you building a new facility here in Beatrice and I imagine some 50



Photo by David Nore

Breaking Ground: (from left) Col. Mark Stockstell, Beatrice Mayor Dennis Schuster, Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, Denis Goeser of LEO Daly Architecture and David Langenberg of Hawkins Construction break the ground for the new Armed Forces Readiness Center in Beatrice, March 9. The new 60,000-square-foot \$10 million center is expected to be completed by the spring of 2010. It will replace Army Guard armories in Beatrice and Fairbury, and a similar U.S. Army Reserve facility in Wymore.

years ago across the street someone else was saying similar words. But they are being said again and we are not tired of saying them," said Beatrice Mayor Dennis Schuster.

"Welcome and we hope you have another successful 50 years in Beatrice, Neb.," he said.

Denis Goeser of LEO-Daly Architecture said his company is ready to deliver a high quality facility to the Guard, Reserve, and Beatrice. "We've taken a lot of

success stories from recent projects and melded them into this design. We have had really great support from the city, National Guard and Army Reserve."

Once completed, the facility will house approximately 150 traditional Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers and approximately 65 U.S. Army Reservists. The center will also be home to 11 full-time Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers and one full-time U.S. Army Reserve employee.

DEATH continued from page 1.

gram in preparation for basic training when he collapsed while cooling down from a morning run.

After receiving immediate initial treatment at Camp Ashland, Treacle was transported by ambulance to Papillion where he received treatment at Midlands Hospital before being transferred to Bergan Mercy Medical Center in Omaha. He died enroute to the hospital.

Treacle is survived by his wife Nicole and his two daughters, Rosaland and Claire Ann.

He was buried with full military honors on March 4 in Callaway, Neb.

"The entire Nebraska National Guard is deeply saddened by the loss of Private Treacle," said Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska. "Our hearts and thoughts go out to his wife Nicole, his daughters and his entire family."

The incident is under investigation.

According to his obituary, Treacle

was born on April 20, 1984, to Robert E. Treacle Sr. and Diane (Allvin) Treacle. He lived in many different areas before moving to Cozad his freshman year and then to Dunning, Neb., where he graduated from Sandhills High School in 2003.

He and his wife were married in July 2004, shortly after they moved to Broken Bow, Oconto, Callaway and finally to Lexington.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Justin Schmitt, who worked with Treacle in the RSP shortly after he enlisted in the Nebraska Army Guard last November, Treacle was widely liked by the entire staff.

"He was one of those guys who would never quit on himself," said Schmitt. "He caught on to things real quick and he remembered them from drill to drill."

"All the cadre liked him a lot because he worked so hard. He would never quit on himself," he said. "You just couldn't

help but like him."

Schmitt said that Treacle had told him that he had wanted to join the National Guard since he was 15 years old. He was scheduled to attend basic training in March.

Schmitt said that he was shocked when he learned of Treacle's death, adding that he had no doubt that Treacle would've been an outstanding Soldier.

"He would've done well in the National Guard," he said. "He was going to be one of those Soldiers that every unit would've wanted to have in their organization. He was going to be one of those Soldiers who, if you gave him a task, would've accomplished it in about 20 minutes and then would've come back asking for more."

"He definitely wasn't going to be one of those guys who wants to spend the entire drill with their backs against the drill floor wall," he added. "He was going to be a good Soldier."

Army Guard to phase out 'Stop Loss' program by late summer

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

The Army will phase out use of the so-called "stop-loss" program between now and January, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said March 18.

Since the beginning of his term as defense secretary, Gates has called on the services to eliminate their dependence on the controversial program that allows the involuntary extension of service members' active duty past the scheduled end of their term of service.

The Army currently has 13,000 Soldiers whose active duty status was extended through the program so they could deploy with their units. The Army is the only service using the program.

"We have the legal authority to do it," Gates said during a Pentagon news conference. "But... I felt, particularly in these numbers, that it was breaking faith. It wasn't a violation of the enlistment contract. But I believe that when somebody's end date of service comes up, to hold them against their will, if you will, is just not the right thing to do."

The secretary said there will always be the need to hold a few people in the service, but it should be a small number. "I would like to get it down to scores, not thousands," he said.

The secretary's decision will eliminate the use of stop-loss for deploying Soldiers.

"Effective this August, the U.S. Army Reserve will no longer mobilize units under stop-loss," Gates said. "The Army National Guard will stop doing so in September and active Army units will cease employing stop-loss in January."

The goal is to cut the number of Soldiers remaining in the Army under stop-loss by 50 percent by June 2010 and to near zero by March 2011. "We will retain the authority to use stop-loss under extraordinary circumstances," Gates said.

The Army will put in place a number of incentives to encourage Soldiers to voluntarily extend their enlistments to mitigate the impact the decision will have on unit cohesion and strength.

Starting this month, the Army will pay stop-losses Soldiers \$500 a month. The program is retroactive to Oct. 1, which was when Congress passed the law permitting the payments.

Army leaders spoke to the secretary recently on the proposal, and they are putting in place the directives and regulations to make it work, Army officials said.

"I think that the way the Army is approaching this mitigates those risks, so I feel comfortable with this plan," Gates said.

Eyes On Fire

Omaha military policemen receive dose of pepper spray to prepare them for upcoming annual training

By **Spc. Koan Nissen**
Staff Writer

The 402nd Military Police Battalion will help guard some of the worst criminals in the military this summer during their annual training at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

And because of their proximity to these folks, every one in the unit – every clerk, every cook, every officer – has to be prepared for what might go down at the United States Disciplinary Barracks.

So while preparing for AT during their March drill, the members of the Nebraska Army National Guard military police unit all got pepper sprayed – a full blast right in the face.

“I should have cooked today,” said Sgt. Chelsea Self as she wiped her reddened face more than 20 minutes later. Self was among more than 70 Soldiers experiencing the spray’s effects: Inflamed skin, intense pain, tears and a nose gushing snot.

Pepper spray is more properly known as Oleoresin Capsicum, or O.C. It is derived from hot peppers, but is several-hundred times more powerful than a jalapeno.

When correctly used by military police or other law enforcement officers, it is directed toward the eyes of an unruly suspect or prisoner in order to bring them under control without lethal force.

The reason the battalion’s Soldiers were sprayed with the painfully-irritating chemical is a simple one: In the chaos of trying to subdue someone, they too could get sprayed, by accident. They must know what it feels like and understand they can continue to function even with the chemical in their face, making them feel as if their eyeballs were engulfed in scalding sand.

“It’s good to know the effects of cross contamination,” said Staff Sgt. Jason Allan, a one-year veteran of the unit and Grand Island police officer who sprayed



Eye Wash: Sgt. Charles Garman decontaminates his face and eyes in an eyewash station at the North Omaha Readiness Center during pepper spray training, March 7. The training was designed to help prepare the unit Soldiers for an upcoming annual training at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

everyone in headquarters company, one by one, from the lowest private to battalion commander.

The full day of training started off with an hour of classroom instruction followed by a one-hour practical exercise using inert canisters of spray. Those canisters delivered a harmless stream of liquid that helped prepare Soldiers for the real thing.

After the Soldiers had been properly instructed on the delivery of spray, they gathered in their physical fitness uniforms and were shown how the course would go.

Here’s how it went:

One by one, each Soldier went to a designated spot on the driveway of a motorpool at the North Omaha Readiness Center, where the unit drills.



Photos by Capt. Andrew Nelson

Even the Battalion Commander Gets a Taste of Pepper Spray: Lt. Col. Byron Diamond, commander of the 402nd Military Police Battalion, is blasted with pepper spray during the battalion’s pepper spray training, March 7, in Omaha. The training was designed to give the Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers confidence that they could continue to operate even though exposed to the painful spray.

Those awaiting their turn watched as the process unfolded. And there was ample time to

Soldier holding a large protective pad (most times, the Soldier holding that pad was their bat-

contemplate how they too would feel when it was their turn.

“I’ve been thinking about it since Wednesday,” said Pfc. Seth Larson, a paralegal on his second drill with the unit. The spraying would be, he said, a “good initiation.”

First, Allan would spray the Soldiers from approximately six feet away with their eyes closed.

Once the spray had made contact with the eyeballs of the Soldier, they were directed to their first station for hand-to-hand combat. There, they delivered knee strikes to another

talion commander, Lt. Col. Byron Diamond.)

The sprayed Soldier would shout “get back” while delivering repeated blows. A prescribed amount of time would go by before a whistle was blown signaling it was time to change stations.

With the painful substance still burning, barely able to keep their eyes open and breathing hard, each Soldier was then sent to Station 2 for multiple assailant combat. Here the sprayed Soldiers would defend themselves against two simulated assailants attacking them with protective pads.

Hit after hit, they would have to protect themselves.

Once the second station was complete they weren’t quite done. Off to the third stage for hand and elbow strikes.

Again the Soldiers found themselves dealing with a simulated uncooperative subject needing to be subdued.

The whistle finally blew and the fourth and final stage was now at hand. Walking toward another Soldier acting as an inmate or suspect, they would yell, “Get on the ground.” The suspect would do just that; a pair of plastic handcuffs were given to the sprayed Soldier, who would tie the suspect’s wrists.

Then it was off to a group of Omaha firefighters, who ran a stream of water into each sprayed Soldier’s eyes. The Soldier was then led off to an industrial eyewash station just inside the readiness center for more water, before given a washcloth and led away to recover some more.

“I almost can’t think straight,” said acting 1st Sgt. Shawn Griffith after completing the course.

The affects for most would last for 20 to 40 more minutes.

“Any one of these Soldiers could get contaminated,” said Capt. Jeffrey Boyden, Headquarters and Headquarters Company commander. “So I wanted to show them they could still operate.”

And with that, each and every one of the Soldiers did.

Nebraska team growing local relationships in Afghanistan

By **Capt. Michael Greenberger**
5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – As the noon sun crept toward the mountains west of Janquadam, Feb. 28, children ran from all corners of the village, greeting the group of Soldiers from the Forward 28th Agribusiness Development Team.

On this warm February day, the team was on a mission to help a blind farmer develop his fields and build a new vineyard to eventually grow grapes in.

The ADT, a National Guard unit deployed from Nebraska, has come to Afghanistan to assist, teach, train and educate the farmers on better farming techniques and introduce the farmers to grasses and alfalfa for better animal health.

After exchanging hellos with locals, the Guardsmen set to work measuring and marking the field for the new vineyard as well as taking soil samples.

While the Soldiers worked, children swarmed all around them offering homemade sling shots for a dollar each. Some troops paid the children for their wares, while others offered up whatever they could – candy, gum, pens, gloves. Soon, smiling children played in the field and some even assisted them in their tasks.

No strangers to this village, Soldiers from the 28th have visited several times before.

“On previous mission we assessed the farmer’s fields,” said Sgt. 1st Class Eldon R. Kuntzelman. “Then we got a letter of

agreement from the land owner and later presented our plan to him.”

“Marking and measuring the field was our primary mission,” said 1st Lt. Eric Sattelberg, Agricultural team chief. “Our goal on every mission is to improve relations with the locals. In the long run, this type of mission will strengthen the bond between Afghanistan and the U.S. because they know that we are here to help grow this nation rather than destroy it.”

The 28th has more plans for Janquadam including installing grain storage bins, planting fruit and nut trees, working with animal health, water management, training and education in tractor maintenance, setting up green houses and underground storage for vegetables.

The future of ADT operations is simple explained Sattelberg – grow this nation into a thriving country of different fruits and vegetables.

“The goal is a continuation of ADT rotations,” said Sattelberg. “Several teams are either on the ground or being identified for a potential rotation. We are here doing one field at a time through demonstration farms as well as with other projects.”

The demonstration crops afford the farmers an opportunity to learn a variety



Photos by Capt. Michael Greenberger

Security Mission: Spc. Aaron Closson, 28th Forward Agribusiness Development Team, keeps a watchful eye on the road while providing security on a mission to help a local Afghan farmer Feb. 28. The 28th Forward Agribusiness Development Team is made up of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers.

of methods for growing crops and then allow the local farmers to try different techniques for growing crops in their own fields.

About half the unit has been deployed before and all of the 52-member team volunteered for the deployment.

The 28th works in 4 provinces – Bamiyan, Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa. Four other ADTs operate across Afghanistan with more on the way.

After the work was done, the children shared more than sling shots and gum with the group of agricultural specialists – they shared themselves. They talked, they gave high-fives and they smiled and laughed...a precious commodity in a time of war.



New Friends: 1st Lt. Josh Kohout, 28th Forward Agribusiness Development Team, chats with local children while on a mission to help a local Afghan farmer, Feb. 28.

As the troops left, the children followed them out of the village with one collective question – when would they be back?

“The locals are becoming very familiar with the ADT and our mission since we have conducted numerous missions to the same locations,” said Sattelberg. “We are respectful toward the locals and I think as long as we continue to respect them, they will continue to welcome us in their village.”

Nebraska Air Guard crews to perform 135 Memorial Day salutes

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Two Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker crews will conduct aerial salutes over 135 Nebraska cemeteries, May 25, when the 155th Air Refueling Wing conducts its annual Memorial Day commemoration.

According to Col. Rick Evans, commander of the Lincoln-based 155th ARW, the organization will be using two aircraft this year, the largest Memorial Day effort in several years.

“Over the past few years, organizational commitments to the Global War on Terror and on-going inspections have limited our effort to a single aircraft,” said Evans. “This year, by flying two aircraft, we will be able to increase the range of our salutes while still supporting several major commitments at Lincoln’s Memorial and Wyuka Cemeteries and Omaha’s Forest Lawn and Westlawn Cemeteries.”

Along with the Omaha and Lincoln salutes, the two volunteer tanker crews will also be conducting flybys of Fort McPherson Cemetery, Grand Island Cemetery and Grand Island’s Veterans Memorial Cemetery, as well as similar salutes in North Platte, Kearney, Fremont, Holdrege, Norfolk,

Schuyler and Seward.

Also of note is that a flyover is planned for Paxton, marking the first time the Guard has ventured into the Mountain Time Zone on Memorial Day.

The Nebraska Air Guard has conducted Memorial Day flyovers since the 1970s, with Evans planning all of the events held since 1987. The unit did not plan to fly in 1994 during its conversion from the RF-4C Phantom to the KC-135 Stratotanker.

“There have also been a couple of years bad weather kept us from flying,” said Evans.

Evans said the unit is proud to continue its tradition of saluting the state’s veterans. That feeling is magnified considering the nature of current combat missions overseas by members of the Nebraska Air and Army National Guard.

“The Nebraska Air National Guard is honored to pay tribute to the many brave Americans who have served and continue to serve their country so well,” said Evans.

“These flyovers salute their courage and sacrifice in the face of danger,” he added. Evans also noted that these flyovers salute the communities which have supported their hometown military members.

A complete list can be found at www.neguard.com

Air Guard’s top sergeant visits Nebraska units in April

By 1st Lt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Chief Master Sgt. Richard A. Smith, the command chief master sergeant to the director of the Air National Guard, National Guard Bureau, spent two days visiting the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln and the 170th Operational Support Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, April 4-5.

During this, his third visit to the state, Smith was able to offer words of encouragement to new recruits who had not yet left for basic military training, answer questions from members around the 155th ARW, and enjoy lunch with members from the unit.

“We have an endless supply of great Airmen doing great things and that’s what makes my job enjoyable,” Smith said, adding that many junior enlisted and young officers have joined in a time where they know and expect deployments.



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Words of Advice: Chief Master Sgt. Richard A. Smith, command chief master sergeant to the director of the Air National Guard, talks with members of the Nebraska Air Guard’s Student Flight during his April visit to Nebraska. Pictured are (from left) Airman 1st Class Timmothy Bennight, Airman 1st Class Scott Gentry, Airman 1st Class Nicholas Wollenburg and Airman 1st Class Arthur Hardesty.

“I think we have a real appetite with the young enlisted and the young officers; they want to deploy. That’s why they joined. They want to serve.”

His final words of encourage-

ment to a group of enlisted and officers from the 155th ARW were that of appreciation.

“Thank you all for serving. You make it happen,” Smith said.

Nebraska Guard intelligence specialists make clean sweep during competition

By Maj. Jason Ragone
170th Group

If a person was to ask any member of the 170th Operations Support Squadron (OSS) Intelligence Flight what they did last year, he or she would probably get a “nothing much” or “prepared some briefings.”

Now, if that same person asked any of their superiors the answer would be distinctly different. That is because six of the nine flight members won a higher headquarters intelligence award last year.

The following Nebraska Air Guardsmen garnered the following annual awards for 2008:

• Maj. Jason Ragone, 8th Air Force Outstanding Air Reserve Component Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Field Grade Officer of the Year;

• Capt. Jennifer Leavitt, 8th Air Force Outstanding Air Reserve Component Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Company Grade Officer of the Year;

• Capt. Kevin Johnson, United States Strategic Command Global Innovation and Strategy Center Reserve Company Grade Officer of the Year;

• Tech. Sgt. Chuck Aden, United States Strategic Command Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

• Staff Sgt. Tony Whitfield, 8th Air Force Outstanding Air Re-

serve Component Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

• Staff Sgt. Jon Carrison (then Airman), 8th Air Force Outstanding Air Reserve Component Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Airman of the Year

Of these individuals, all beat competitors from not only the Air National Guard, but also the United States Air Force Reserve, full and part-time employees. Further, the 8th Air Force winners all beat out potential rivals from other bases.

At this time, one winner, Carrison, also won at the Air Combat Command level and is still competing at the Air Force level.

Their accomplishments stand as a true testament to the professionalism and expertise the Nebraska Air National Guard intelligence professionals add to the Total Force, Offutt Air Force Base and United States Strategic Command.

Every single competitor works among active duty Air Force, joint service partners, and Department of Defense civilians.

The flight’s contributions to the overall war effort are felt everyday in their respective intelligence work centers. Their knowledge and expertise is called upon on a daily basis to train active duty and Air Guard subordinates and prepare intelligence materials for base and command senior leaders.

Nebraska journalists earn numerous awards during Guard print media contest

Public Affairs Office
Nebraska National Guard

The staff of the Prairie Soldier once again did well during the 2008 National Guard Bureau Print Media competition.

Competing against National Guard journalists from across the country, the Nebraska National Guard’s newspaper staff once again earned top honors by taking 18 individual or collective awards, outdistancing journalists from California and South Carolina which finished second and third overall with 10 and six awards respectively.

The Prairie Soldier’s editor, Maj. Kevin Hynes, was the state’s top award winner this year, earning 11 individual writing and photography awards, including the Air National Guard’s Journalist of the Year and Photographer of the Year Awards.

Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon, staff photojournalist, earned two individual writing awards, including second place in the Air Guard’s Outstanding New Print Journalist of the Year competition.

Additionally, the Prairie Soldier newspaper took second place in the overall tabloid-format newspaper category, and third-place in the special achievement in print media

category for its reporting on the Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike mobilizations of September 2008.

First place finishers in the Air National Guard competition and the top three finishers in the Army National Guard competition will now compete in their respective service-level competitions.

Results from the 2008 National Guard Print Media Competition:

Prairie Soldier: 2nd Place, Tabloid-Format Newspaper; 3rd Place, Special Achievement in Print Media.

Maj. Kevin Hynes: 1st Place, Sports Articles; 1st Place, News Photograph; 1st Place, Air National Guard Journalist of the Year; 1st Place, Air National Guard Photographer of the Year; 2nd Place, News Articles; 2nd Place, Feature Articles; 2nd Place, Photojournalism; 2nd Place, Feature Photograph; 2nd Place, Portrait/Personality Photograph; 3rd Place, Commentary; 3rd Place, Sports Photograph.

Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon: 1st Place, News Articles; 2nd Place, Air National Guard Outstanding New Print Journalist.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland: 1st Place, Sports Articles.

1st Lt. Camara Minks: 2nd Place, Sports Articles.

Retired Sgt. Maj. David Nore: 3rd Place, Portrait/Personality Photograph.

Nebraska Air Guard spotlighting Wilber

Winning Artists: (From left) Nick Hartwig and Brandon Scusa, Wilber-Claytonia Junior-Senior High School, show off their winning design for the 155th Air Refueling Wing Community Nose Art Program, April 14. Their design was chosen from more than 40 entries presented by students from Wilber-Claytonia Jr.-Sr. High school. A formal unveiling ceremony will be held later in the year when the design will be placed on a KC-135R Stratotanker Aerial Refueler from the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube

Air Guard officially opens new recruiting office in Omaha

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's presence in Omaha received a huge booster shot, March 9, when Guard and city officials formally cut the ribbon to the Air Guard's new recruiting office.

"When you talk about the state of Nebraska and the Nebraska National Guard, Omaha is the largest community in the state," said Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, shortly before he, Omaha Mayor Mike Fahee and other Guard leaders officially opened the first Nebraska Air Guard recruiting office to be located outside of Lincoln.

"We are community-based organization and we are committed to being part of every community," said Kadavy, adding that one of the first decisions he made as adjutant general in 2007 focused on exploring new ways to make the Nebraska Guard's presence in Omaha larger.

"We need to give Omahans an opportunity to be part of their Nebraska Air National Guard. So we went to work. It took a year, but... we're happy to be here giving the youth and citizens of Omaha an opportunity to serve in their Air National Guard."

Located at 10816 Elm Street

in Rockbrook Village off of 108th and Center Streets, the office will house two full-time Air Guard recruiters and an office assistant. According to Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Dean, a Nebraska Air Guard production recruiter who will work in the Omaha office with Tech. Sgt. Clashaud Robbins, Air Guard officials have high hopes for the new facility.

"It's kind of centrally located here Omaha. They did a lot of research to study the traffic flow and everything. That was the main reason for putting it into Rockbrook," said Dean.

He added that the Omaha office will allow recruiters to better capitalize on the state's largest recruiting market. "Omaha has more population. For the future of our base (we needed an office in Omaha) to help us succeed in recruiting."

Dean said the recruiters actually moved to Omaha late last year, however it has taken several months to get the new office completely up and running.

He said he and Robbins are already seeing the value of the



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Open For Business: (From left) Omaha Mayor Mike Fahee, Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Dean, Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, Tech. Sgt. Clashaud Robbins and Col. Rick Evans prepare to cut the ribbon to the new Nebraska Air National Guard recruiting office in Omaha's Rockbrook Village. The storefront recruiting station is the first Nebraska Air Guard recruiting office to be opened outside of Lincoln.

new facility.

"It's a lot easier with all of the Omaha people that we meet with," he said. "Normally, we would have to come out to a restaurant and sit down, and that was money that we would have

to get reimbursed for."

"Having them come out here to our office and sit down, it's a lot more professional," Dean said.

Brigadier General Jon Fago, Nebraska Air Guard chief of staff, agreed, saying that in order

"It means a great deal to us. It allows our young people to stay here in town, to raise their families and to really contribute to not only the safety of our country, but also to the vibrancy of our community."

RECRUITING continued from page 1.

phy, commander of the Nebraska Army Guard's State Recruiting and Retention Command. According to Murphy, the Nebraska Army National Guard began the fiscal year, which began last October, with the goal of enlisting 600 new Soldiers into the organization. By the end of March, it had already enlisted more than 300.

"We're 93 (people) ahead of where we were last year at this time."

The gloomy economic forecast has had at least a partial impact on that effort, he said.

"I still believe that in Nebraska, the number one reason for joining is to serve your nation and state," said Murphy. "But we have noticed at career fairs that more people are looking for jobs... another skill to use as a discriminator."

"That kind of tells us that it's more than just serving your country. It's also learning a job skill as a part-time Soldier; learning another skill that you can use as a discriminator versus another employee who doesn't get those leadership skills that you get from the Guard."

Economics, however, aren't the only reason why the Guard is doing so well this year, said Murphy. In fact, he said, Nebraska's recent success is probably the result of a number of factors.

First, he said, the state took a number of measures approximately three years ago to shift more of the organization's attention toward recruiting new Soldiers and retaining those already in the organization.

"Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, who was the adjutant general at the time, and Col. Tom Schuurmans, the current chief of staff, really looked at the issues seriously and then put into affect a number of programs to help the state's recruiting and retention force succeed," said Murphy. "Over the course of the last two to three years, we've been given a wealth of resources and we've put those resources into place."

For example, he said, the organization has a director of education services now working in Omaha. It has also increased the number of Army Guard recruiters assigned to the state's largest population center. Increased budgets for recruiting marketing have also helped tremendously, he said.

"We felt like we were set for a big year this year," said Murphy.

Another factor contributing to the pace of this year's enlistments, said Murphy, was a recent decision by National Guard Bureau to change the way bonuses are distributed that went into effect on March 1. Prior to the change, said Murphy, 85

to 90 percent of all new recruits qualified to receive a \$20,000 enlistment bonus. Now approximately 15 percent of all new recruits qualify to receive that amount.

The reason for the change, Murphy said, was a direct result of the Guard's overwhelming success in recruiting that has now put the Guard over the maximum allowable strength number assigned by the U.S. Congress. Bonuses now will be targeted toward specific jobs in specific units that have been designated at "critical fill."

"You can still get a \$20,000 bonus. You just have to go to a specific unit and a specific (Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)) and ship at a specific time," Murphy said. In Nebraska, such critical jobs can now be found in the new airborne rigger unit in Seward, the new engineering unit in Wahoo, and the Lincoln-based 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade headquarters, which has a need for intelligence specialists and warrant officers.

The change to the bonus program may have caused a number of people to enlist into the Guard in February, said Murphy.

"That accelerated some peoples' decisions," he said. "They may have still joined the Guard, but it gave them a sense of urgency, I guess."

The effects of the economy, however, can't be underestimated.

"I think the slowing economy and the lack of jobs has helped," Murphy said. He said anecdotally, state recruiters have noticed more people who have inquired about the Guard's benefit programs—such as dental insurance—and the additional skills they can learn in the military.

In the Nebraska Air National Guard, recruiters are now focusing more attention on the Omaha metro area as well. The organization recently opened its first recruiting office outside of the Lincoln area in Omaha and now has two full-time recruiters assigned to take advantage of the metro area's growing population, said Senior Master Sgt. Stuart Stofferahn, Nebraska Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention superintendent.

"The upward trend is attributed to a number of different reasons—most notably increased staffing, an Omaha storefront opening and the Guard Recruiting Assistant Program whereby each traditional unit member or retiree can obtain training to assist our recruiting staff in nominating potential unit members and receive compensation for each new enlistee or accession," said Stofferahn.

Nebraska Army Guard making big strides in retaining state's Soldiers

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Getting people to join the Nebraska National Guard is a huge challenge. Getting them to stay in is another.

For those wanting to know how to do both well, simply contact the Nebraska Army National Guard.

Along with setting records for recruiting in February and being on pace to register one of the best recruiting years in recent memory, the Nebraska Army National Guard is currently ranked number two in the nation in retaining qualified Soldiers.

According to Lt. Col. Jim Murphy, commander of the Army Guard's State Recruiting and Retention Command, along with putting programs into place to help the state's recruiters fill the Guard's ranks, officials also put considerable resources into giving the state's retention managers the tools they need to successfully keep good Soldiers in uniform.

"What I think we've done the best at here in Nebraska is we've put an emphasis on retention that some states haven't put on it," said Murphy. "We take retention

(sergeants) at the battalion level out of our (full-time) authorization—out of hide essentially—and that's really helped us."

"Other states have recruited just like us, but I believe in Nebraska one of the things we've been able to do is retain the people."

About three years ago, retention looked like it was going to be a huge issue for Nebraska, said Murphy. At that time, members of the 1-167th Cavalry were just returning from a mission in Iraq that saw them being extended overseas for about four extra months. Coupled with the five months of training they completed prior to deploying, Murphy said officials feared that the vast majority of the returning Soldiers would opt to get out of the Guard.

In order to meet the perceived need, former adjutant general Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and Col. Tom Schuurmans, the current Nebraska Army Guard chief of staff, decided to beef up the state's retention force while giving them tools to better meet the retention needs.

"We were able to keep a good majority (of the returning Soldiers)," said Murphy, "a higher percentage than I thought we would."

Complicating matters, however, is the fact that the Nebraska Air Guard is already over strength, said Stofferahn. That means, he added, recruiters have limited positions into which they can recruit new Airmen.

In March, he said, positions available to enlist into had dropped to essentially zero.

"I don't know when the last time that happened," said Stofferahn. "It has definitely created some challenges."

The Nebraska Air Guard currently consists of the 155th Air Refueling Wing and Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln and the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base.

"Essentially, what we are doing is compiling a waiting list for people who have a desire to join the Nebraska Air Guard," he said, adding that National Guard Bureau has placed limits on how far over strength a unit can go in a certain career field. "If a person comes in and wants to enlist into one of our critical positions, the time it takes is pretty small. If they come in wanting to enlist into one of our positions that are over strength, they may have to wait for

some time before they can actually join."

A surprisingly large number of people are willing to wait, said Stofferahn, although some have decided to look for positions in one of the other services.

The Nebraska Army National Guard has also had to become more "picky" about who it enlists. For example, said Murphy, the level of education required to join the Guard has increased.

"Technically, in Nebraska we are over strength right now versus what we're authorized to have," said Murphy. "What we've got to do now is recruit to exact, specific vacancies. Exact, specific MOSs."

The surge has put the Nebraska National Guard into a better position than it was just a couple years ago, said Murphy.

"The biggest thing is that it gives you an opportunity to get more force structure," he said. "If we are positioned better and growing at a faster rate than other states and territories, National Guard Bureau is more likely to give you different MOSs, different force structure, different units."



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Welcoming Hug: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Gene Coppersmith receives a warm hug from his mother, Virginia Coppersmith, after arriving in Lincoln, Neb., March 6. Coppersmith and other members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment spent seven months airlifting people and cargo across much of Afghanistan during their deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Also pictured is Coppersmith's father, Louis Coppersmith.

Nebraska Guard flying unit receives warm welcome home after mission to Afghanistan

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Normally, when a Nebraska Army National Guard unit returns home from a war-time deployment, they arrive by chartered aircraft or bus.

For members of the Lincoln-based 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment who had been deployed to Afghanistan for the past seven months, their return to Nebraska on March 6 was just a little bit different.

"Usually, they don't make you drive yourself home from a war," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Martin Adkins, commander of the 43rd OSA Det., shortly after he and three other pilots landed a pair of C-12 aircraft back in Nebraska after a monumental five-day journey that began at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. "But this was a little different."

The 43rd OSA Det. was first mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom in July 2008. During the course of the unit's mission in Afghanistan, the nine-person Guard unit was responsible for transporting people and cargo across much of Afghanistan.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Gene Coppersmith, a detachment instructor pilot, said the unit's experience in Afghanistan was unique to what most Soldiers encounter.

"We got a very different view of what a lot of people did because our job of flying personnel and (cargo) kept us over the country at about 26,000 feet. I would tell a very different story than those on the ground out in the (forward operating bases)," he said.

"We have a different perspective, but there are a lot of people who are working real hard and are very proud of what they're doing and the progress that we're making," Coppersmith added.

Flying above Afghanistan also gave Coppersmith and his fellow pilots a unique view, he said.

"Afghanistan is a very diverse country," said Coppersmith, shortly after he stepped off his plane in Lincoln, Neb., and into



Let the Celebration Begin: Caitlyn Caniglia, Vivian Caniglia, Taylor Caniglia, Hurricane Moore and Sgt. 1st Class Kim Moore break into cheers as the first C-12 flown by members of the 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment lands in Lincoln, March 6.

the waiting arms of his family. "The flying we did, we got from border to border...north, south, east and west."

"You'll see tall mountains with snow on them nearly year-round, to the south it's a desert and everything in between," he said. "It has some beautiful mountains and lush green valleys with some very good crops that I didn't expect to see there."

Five of the detachment's Soldiers actually returned home about five days before the pilots and aircraft. Among those was Staff Sgt. Penny Winterburn, who served as a flight operations specialist during the deployment.

Winterburn said she was confronted with a wide variety of feelings as she and her fellow Soldiers traveled back to Lincoln.

"I was scared. I was happy. I was nervous. I had it all and it was all in my stomach," she said.

"It was a weird feeling, but it was a good feeling," Winterburn added.

While in Afghanistan, Winterburn said she and the other support Soldiers spent much of their days updating the unit's mission log with the constant changes they encountered. She said the Soldiers also worked closely with a nearby medical evacuation unit to transport critical equipment across Afghanistan.

"We flew anyone and anything

at any time," she said, adding that the passengers weren't just American and coalition senior leaders – although they did make up the vast majority of the passengers they flew. The unit also occasionally flew enlisted Soldiers to the different bases they needed to get to.

"One day Chief Warrant Officer Adkins went over to the passenger terminal. He wanted to fly some enlisted Soldiers that day," Winterburn said. "He found a couple of privates that needed to get back to Bagram."

Among the senior military and governmental leaders who helped welcome the Soldiers home to Lincoln on March 6 was Gov. Dave Heineman. According to Heineman, the entire state is proud of what the Soldiers accomplished during their mission in Afghanistan.

"We are so proud of you guys for what you've done," said Heineman. "Sometimes we forget that we live in the greatest country in the world today, the United States of America, and you defend our freedom every single day."

Heineman also thanked the families for their support during the mission.

"Thank you for being there," Heineman told the assembled families. "For those of us who have served, we know how important your support is and



Home At Last: A ground crewman marshals a C-12 into its parking spot in Lincoln, Neb., shortly after a Nebraska Army Guard aircrew from the 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment landed it after a long journey that originated in Afghanistan. The detachment was officially welcomed back to Nebraska after spending several months supporting efforts in Afghanistan on March 6.



Welcome Home Dad: Caitlyn Caniglia rushes with outstretched arms toward her father, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jeffery Caniglia, minutes after he landed in Lincoln, Neb., after a mission to Afghanistan. Caniglia is a member of the 43rd Operational Support Airlift Detachment.

that it means so much for these men and women who serve us every day."

Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, echoed those thoughts, saying the 43rd OSA Det. developed a well-earned reputation in Afghanistan amongst the senior military leaders currently assigned there.

"Everywhere I went... (senior leaders) knew who the 43rd were," said Kadavy, recalling a recent visit to Afghanistan. "They were extremely happy and excited and confident in your ability to do the mission. They were glad that you were the unit there with them."

Kadavy also encouraged the Soldiers to take time to thank their families for the support they gave during the mission.

"Soldiers, when you go home, make sure that you give them a big hug because these families go through Hell for you when they're worrying about you," he said.

According to Adkins, the unit

was blessed in that it was filled with extremely competent and professional Soldiers who had a passion for the mission.

"I stood here seven months ago and said I couldn't have picked a better team," he said. "Those words are still true today."

"This was a great team... professional. They all brought it," Adkins said. "We were tasked with moving high level combatant commanders around the theater. You provided that service they expected and you provided the services with the professionalism that is expected by the National Guard these days."

Winterburn agreed, saying she was proud to be able to serve with such a unit.

"I'm glad that I had the experience and these guys were great to work with," she said. "I haven't worked with someone who loves their job more than they do. They love coming in and flying."

"So it was enjoyable for me because they love what they do."

Airborne Soldiers join ‘Zero Degree Club’

By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

When single-digit temperatures hit Nebraska, they typically keep most people inside their warm houses.

For Nebraska’s airborne Soldiers, however, it’s just another aspect of a parachute jump.

Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard’s Omaha-based 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) recently ended a week-long intra-state brigade training management seminar on a high note when they conducted a parachute jump onto an icy cold Nebraska training site, Jan. 24.

The jump – a quarterly requirement for airborne Soldiers to maintain their ‘jump qualified’ status – was a combined operation that included Nebraska Soldiers from the 195th FSC (SO) (Airborne), Utah Soldiers from the 197th Special Troops Co. (Special Operations) (Airborne) and regular Army Soldiers from the 528th Special Operations Sustainment Brigade (Airborne) out of Fort Bragg, N.C.

The mission was supported by several Nebraska National Guard units including Detachment 2, 165th Quartermaster Company, which provided parachutes for the first time as a new unit, and Company B, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, which provided airlift support in the form of a CH-47 Chinook helicopter.

Air temperatures on the ground were 1 degree at the time of the jump, with officials estimating that the wind chill at the 1,500-foot drop elevation at 15 degrees below zero.

Despite the bone-chilling temperatures, airborne Soldiers stepped off the helicopter ramp with smiles on their faces as they left the CH-47 Chinook helicopter high over “Husker Drop Zone” near the Mead Training Site.

“It’s colder than snot,” said 1st Sgt. Chuck Rackham, first sergeant for the 197th STC, as he described his first experience with the Nebraska weather. “I thought Utah was cold, but this has it beat...by far.”

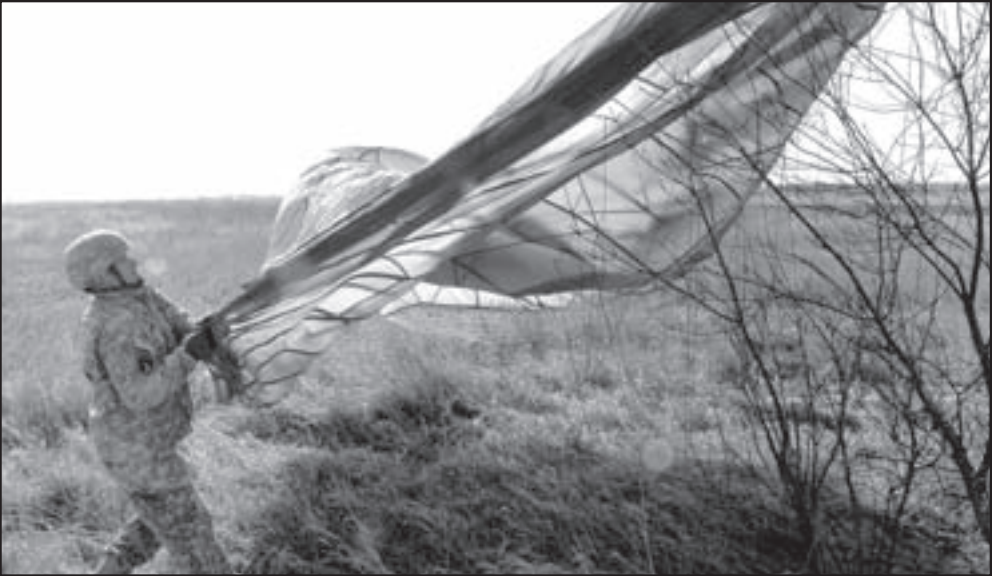
In order to deal with the cold temperatures, Soldiers are issued cold weather clothing gear. For paratroopers, though, it isn’t possible to wear all the cold weather gear supplied by the Army. The airborne Soldiers fall under the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) and their standard operating procedure states that Soldiers are not even allowed to wear gloves during a parachute jump.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Edward Whitehill, 195th FSC readiness sergeant



Photos by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland

Drop Zone: Soldiers from Nebraska’s 195th Forward Support Company (Special Operations) (Airborne) and 165th Quartermaster Company parachute into a frozen ‘Drop Zone Husker’ near Mead, Neb., with members of the Utah Army National Guard’s 197th Special Troops Company (SO) (Airborne,) Jan. 24.



Tangled Up: A member of the 165th Quartermaster Company pulls a parachute out of a tree at ‘Drop Zone Husker.’ Following the jump each of the parachutes will be carefully inspected and repaired by members of the new unit at Seward, Neb.

and the only Jumpmaster-qualified Soldier in the Omaha unit, the procedures are a necessary part of being a member of Special Operations.

“For (USASOC), it’s SOP that you don’t jump with gloves to make sure that you can properly grasp equipment as required,” said Whitehill. “If you have to activate the canopy release assembly and you had real thick gloves, maybe you couldn’t grab that and you would be drug across the drop zone. I can see that

it’s a good SOP to have in our unit also.”

Most of the Soldiers said they compensated for the temperatures by keeping warm with the adrenaline coursing through their bodies

The paratroopers weren’t the only ones who had to deal with chill, either. Conditions were cold for support personnel also.

Soldiers on the ground had to position a marker panel so that the jumpmaster on the aircraft would know when to signal



Wind Speed Check: Warrant Officer Michael Beraldi, aerial delivery technician, checks the ground wind speed before giving the okay for Soldiers to jump onto ‘Drop Zone Husker.’ With temperatures hovering at 1 degree and wind speeds at around 6 knots, Guard officials estimated that the wind chill was around -15 degrees during the Jan. 24 parachute jump.

Guard’s 72nd Civil Support Team uses Air Force’s workhorse to deploy equipment

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

The 72nd Civil Support Team-Weapons of Mass Destruction loaded their vehicles into multiple C-130 aircraft for the first time on Friday, March 13, at the Lincoln Air National Guard Base.

“A C-5 (a much larger aircraft) fits all of our trucks and equipment inside. It is a huge aircraft for equipment and it also seats over 70 personnel up above, but we have never loaded into C-130s, so this is a test for us,” said Capt. David Cooper, operations officer for the 72nd CST.

Staff Sgt. Adam Kosch drove the trailer containing the TOC (Tactical Operations Center), onto the C-130 first.

“It has never been loaded on a C-130 before; we have been trying to figure out if it would fit,” Kosch said. “On paper it will fit.”

The exercise that the CST

was preparing for was officially called an Applied Radiological Response Techniques Certification, which according to Cooper is a required check mark on the report card that represents operational readiness for a CST. The requirement included taking all of the CST equipment across the United States along with radiation detection equipment to a facility that has real world nuclear material that can be used in the exercise.

“We are essentially going to take out all of our equipment along with our radiation detection equipment and we will go respond to things like a dirty bomb,” Cooper said. “We will have three days of that training, and we will get to see some of their nuclear facilities.”

The facility, which is referred to as the HAMMER site, is located in the southeast corner of the state of Washington and is operated by the Department of

Energy. Fort Lewis is four hours away and the area is actually a desert-like part of Washington State. Officially the site is called the Volpentest HAMMER Training Center.

According to site documents HAMMER stands for Hazardous Materials Management and Emergency Response. The site refers to itself as a training complex for workers and emergency responders for many federal, state, county and city agencies. It is a unique complex that combines more hazardous materials and emergency response training facilities than any other complex in the United States.

“The real value of going there is that they have real radiological sources, which we don’t have when we conduct our training here. You normally have to punch in values for radiological material, so this will bring another aspect to our training, in that pieces of our equipment will



Photo by David Nore

Tight Squeeze: Sgt Landen Koopman backs a 72nd Civil Support Team command vehicle onto a C-130 aircraft under the direction of a load master from the 135th Airlift Squadron, Maryland, Air National Guard, during the load-out exercise held near the Army Aviation Support Facility in Lincoln.

actually read actual radiological readings rather than us having to feed values to our equipment,” Cooper said.

The exercise would culminate with an exercise to test the CST’s skills in each of their assigned areas.

“Survey guys will get to do actual survey (of radiological material.) I will perform my job in operations and we will work each piece of our mission, doing our real job rather than supporting an exercise for someone else,” Cooper said.

Joining forces to teach new Army sergeants

■Camp Ashland, Fort Riley work together to put on two Warrior Leaders Courses

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

and

By David Nore

Public Information Officer

Anyone who has ever attended classes at a major college or university will say that getting from one end of campus to a class on another side is often a challenge even under the best of conditions. Now, imagine a campus stretching more than 175 miles across.

Instructors at Camp Ashland's Warrior Leader Course don't have to imagine this extremely unlikely proposal. They've actually lived it.

For two weeks in mid-March the instructors conducted a Warrior Leaders Course at Camp Ashland for more than 220 active duty, Army Reserve and Army National Guard prospective noncommissioned officers while also helping conduct a second WLC at Fort Riley, Kan., for approximately 50 other active duty Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. John Payer, commandant of the 1st Battalion (Noncommissioned Officer Academy,) 209th Training Regiment, this marked the first time that Nebraska instructors have conducted two WLCs at the same time, separated by more than three hours

of driving time.

"It's a challenge," said Payer, adding that such things as automation issues, instructor familiarization and maintaining a consistent training schedule were some of the biggest challenges that Camp Ashland had to overcome.

In order to accomplish the feat, Camp Ashland sent two senior small group leaders to Fort Riley along with some administrative staff to work with active duty instructors there. At the same time, Fort Riley sent some of its instructors to Camp Ashland to essentially shadow the 209th Instructors during the course, allowing them to gain valuable teaching experience.

"We're developing a good relationship," said Payer.

Payer said this isn't the first time that Camp Ashland has instructed Fort Riley Soldiers needing to attend WLC. In the past, the organization hosted several active duty courses. Today active duty Soldiers from Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth, Kan., routinely receive their initial NCO training in Nebraska.

That relationship, however, is growing, said Payer.

Payer said Camp Ashland leaders were approached by Fort Riley officials a few months ago about conducting a course at Fort Riley for Soldiers who had just returned from an overseas deployment and will be deploying once again in the very near future.

The goal was to give the Soldier the training they needed without having to spend several weeks away from their families training at such places as Camp Ashland, Fort Knox or Fort Hood.

"(By putting on a course at Fort Riley,) they wouldn't be away from their families for so



Photo by David Nore

Under Fire: Students from the 1st Infantry Division attending the Warrior Leaders Course at Fort Riley, Kan., react to a surprise ambush on their dismounted reconnaissance patrol. The Fort Riley Soldiers were evaluated on their ability to react to unexpected situations and make leadership decisions in an simulated combat environment.



Photo by David Nore

Situation Report: 1st Infantry Soldiers call in a situation report detailing casualty and location information after reacting to a simulated improvised explosive device attack on their patrol at Fort Riley, Kan.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

One-On-One Instruction: Staff Sgt. Earl Bascue, a small group leader at Camp Ashland's 1st Battalion (Noncommissioned Officer Academy, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute, gives Spc. Bradley Kirchgessner, a Warrior Leaders Course student, some pointers as the young enlisted Soldier prepares his plan for a leadership training lane mission.

long," Payer said.

In order to make that request work, Fort Riley and Camp Ashland agreed to work together.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Murphy, Fort Riley WLC command sergeant major, the relationship has definitely had a major impact on the active duty Soldiers attending the training at Fort Riley.

"They are able to go home at night, that is probably the biggest benefit," Murphy said, adding this has had a major positive influence on the morale of the Soldiers. "After you have been gone that long on deployments, even if you can see your kids at night for 10 minutes, that is better than not seeing them at all."

"It's only two weeks, but still all that time adds up," he added.

Master Sgt. Dennis Carroll, Camp Ashland WLC branch chief, said even though the two courses are separated geographically, the course itinerary and standards are still the same.

"We're teaching skill level two leadership tasks," said Carroll as a group of students at Camp Ashland prepared to conduct another field leadership training lane. "This is their intro to the hard-stripe NCO. This is where they learn how to be an NCO and what the differences are between being a follower and a leader."

In order to accomplish this, Soldiers are evaluated while leading student squads through a series of training missions under the ever-watchful eyes of the WLC instructors. The goal isn't necessarily to do the mission correctly, Carroll said, but rather to show the instructors that the prospective

sergeant has the ability deal with the responsibility of making quick decisions under stressful conditions.

"It's a transition from what to think to how to think...to be able to think on your feet," Carroll said. "And with the way that the war is – an asymmetrical war versus a symmetrical war – they need the skills to make informed decisions... in a timely manner."

According to Staff Sgt. Lorenzo Pratt, a WLC instructor from Fort Riley's 1st Infantry Division who was taught how to be an instructor at Camp Ashland, the similarities between the two courses are striking.

"It is very similar to Camp Ashland," he said. "I learned a lot working with the NCOs from Ashland. We do everything they do. They taught us a lot."

Pratt said Fort Riley instructors even set up their classrooms to mirror the ones at Camp Ashland. He added that they are also working to incorporate the automation system that Camp Ashland uses to track a student's progress.

"They came up with a great system for keeping track of the evals that the Soldiers have to do while they are here," he said. "For example, leadership in garrison... they came up with a spreadsheet that you can use to track everything. It is very user-friendly. It showed us something new that we can use here."

There are some differences, though. At Fort Riley, Soldiers receive all of their supply and training support from their parent organizations while at Camp Ashland, trained supply

and training specialists provide support during training. The training area is also much bigger at Fort Riley, allowing the instructors to take more advantage of the terrain.

"The only difference is that we have a lot more area to work our situational training exercises," said Staff Sgt. Lionell Johnson, a Fort Riley, Kan., WLC instructor. "At Camp Ashland, you only have a small area to work with."

Probably the biggest benefit, say instructors at both sites, is the fact that the students are learning not only about how to be an effective sergeant, but also how to be part of the Total Army Team by working with members of the Army Guard and Army Reserve. That's an insight that could pay enormous dividends later on, say the WLC officials.

"They develop that trust that needs to happen when they get out into that real thing," said Payer. "I think it's going to pay dividends in the long run, not just for deployments that are near-term, but farther down the road when these Soldiers become first sergeants and sergeants major."

Learning how to work with Soldiers from other part of the Army is definitely a good thing say the students.

"I'm learning the everyday deals," said Sgt. Daniel Roeber, a truck driver assigned to the Nebraska Army Guard's 189th Transportation Company in Norfolk. "I ask a lot of questions about what (the active duty Soldiers) do all day long. We only get to train one weekend a month and they (the active duty) get to train all

See WLC on 11.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Taking Cover: Sgt. Matthew Everett, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 1742nd Transportation Company, takes cover behind a concrete barrier when his position at Camp Ashland was approached by a suspicious vehicle during a Warrior Leaders Course training exercise.

‘Pike Brigade’ welcomes new commander in April

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Army National Guard’s “Pike Brigade” welcomed a new commander to its helm, April 4, while wishing a former one farewell during a change of command ceremony at the “Spirit of 1776” armory in Lincoln.

With representatives of the organization’s various units standing at attention on the drill floor, Brig. Gen. David C. Petersen relinquished the colors of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade to Col. Philip A. Stemple.

Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, officiated the ceremony.

According to Petersen, who had served as commander of the Nebraska brigade since February 2007, he appreciated all the work the brigade accomplished while overcoming numerous challenges during his tenure.

“These last two years really have been a challenge,” said Petersen, who is headed to the 35th Infantry Division to become the assistant division commander.

For example, the organization not only had to transform itself from an area support group into a battlefield surveillance brigade, it was also responsible for the single-largest out of state deployment of Nebraska National Guardsmen to a domestic emergency when the brigade deployed to Louisiana last September for the Hurricane Gustav relief effort.

“I don’t remember all the things I said when I took command, but I do remember one thing: I said we would work hard and train hard,” he said. “I hope if nothing else, here at the end



Petersen



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Accepting the Colors: Col. Philip A. Stemple accepts the colors of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade from Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, Nebraska adjutant general, during a change of command ceremony held April 4 in Lincoln. Stemple, a former member of the Maryland Army National Guard, took command of the Nebraska Army National Guard brigade from Brig. Gen. David Petersen, who is going on to take an assignment as the assistant division commander of the 35th Infantry Division.

I believe we have worked hard and trained hard.”

Petersen encouraged the brigade to continue working and training hard for its new commander. “A leader can only be as successful as his people allow him to be,” Petersen said. “I hope that the members of the 67th BfSB will give the same honor and loyalty to the new commander as you gave to me.”

Petersen was presented the Legion of Merit for his service with the brigade.

Kadavy thanked Petersen for all that he and the brigade accomplished during his tenure. He also issued a challenge to the incoming commander.

“Colonel Stemple, you have some big shoes to fill and not just literally,” Kadavy said. “We have a tremendous amount of confidence in your talent and abilities. You are the right com-

mander to prepare the brigade for its pending deployment.”

Stemple was born on July 19, 1960, in Baltimore, Md. He is a 1978 graduate of Edgewood High School and received his bachelor’s degree in History from Towson State University in 1983. He also holds a master’s degree in Public Administration from Troy State University and a master’s degree in Operational Art and Strategic Studies from the United States Air Force Air University.

He began his military career in 1980 when he enlisted into the Maryland Army National Guard. He was commissioned as an infantry officer in 1982 after completing the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps course at Loyola College.

Since then he has served in a variety of leadership roles including rifle and weapons

platoon leader, a variety of battalion-level staff positions, company commander, counter-drug operations coordinator, assistant professor of Military Science at the University of Oklahoma.

He also served as chief of Exercise and Deployment at U.S. Army-Europe in Heidelberg, Germany, chief of the Training Division at 1st U.S. Army, chief of the Training Division at National Guard Bureau, chief of the Reserve Component Division at Multi-National Corps-Iraq, and deputy director of Operations for Domestic Operations at National Guard Bureau.

He and his wife Pamela have one son, Tomas, and two daughters, Rachel and Andrea.

In addressing his new command, Stemple thanked the families for their support in the past while asking for their

future support and patience as the brigade continues to train for the future.

“The Soldiers you see here are the pride of our nation,” Stemple told the assembled families. “They are your pride, too.”

“What you need to know family members is that this brigade can not have done what it has or do what it will without your support, your patience, your steadfastness, your inspiration. There’s not a Soldier in uniform who can do it without their families. And if we do not have our families, there is no reason to serve.”

Stemple also challenged the members of the brigade to renew their efforts in helping form the 67th BfSB into one of the top brigades in the U.S. Army.

“To the Soldiers of the 67th Brigade – to the Pike Brigade – your history is long and your history is proud,” he said. “Since before our country’s civil war, since the mud of the trench line of World War I, since the bitter hedgerows of Normandy all the way to the sand and dust of Iraq to the bare landscape of Afghanistan, wherever you have gone, victory has followed. And nothing has stopped you... not even Hell itself.”

“And know this as well: before our careers are over, we will be asked once again to go to a foreign field and defend the cause of freedom,” he said. “And that is why I pledge to you today that your leaders – from the lowest-ranking section sergeant all the way to your brigade commander – will not rest until you rest.”

“And none of us will rest until we have used every resource, taken advantage of every available training, until we have made the maximum effort to make sure that the Pike Brigade is the most highly trained, well equipped, best prepared formation that the American Army can put back into the field.”

WLC

continued from page 10.

month long every day.”

The active duty Soldiers said they, too, gained a lot from being mixed together with members of the Guard and Reserve at Camp Ashland, something that their counterparts attending the training at Fort Riley probably weren’t receiving.

“I was a little surprised at first because we don’t know a whole lot about the Guard and Reserve,” said Sgt. David Lengel, a truck driver with Fort Riley’s 24th Transportation Company. “But those guys know their stuff.”

Lengel said he was promoted to sergeant during his last overseas deployment. By attending the training at Camp Ashland, he said he felt he was finally gaining the tools he knows he needs to be a successful NCO.

“Until now, I just felt like a glorified specialist. I had the rank, but I didn’t have the knowledge.”

He said he now feels ready to tackle the challenges waiting for him back at Fort Riley.

“The instructors here are great,” he said. “I’m going to take the skills I’m learning here back to my unit at Fort Riley and lead my team.”

Nebraska medic receives national honor

By Spc. Koan Nissen
Staff Writer

When Spc. Heather Davey deployed to Iraq, she thought she was going to be her battalion commander’s driver.

Instead, she was reassigned to a field hospital. Face to face with the dismembered, the broken, the burnt and the dying, she provided what her superiors describe as exceptional service.

That performance led to her receiving the prestigious “Angels of the Battlefield” award this spring.

“She saved lives; she saved American lives,” said Lt. Col. Anita Curington, her battalion commander.

Davey, 35, of Lincoln, was promoted to sergeant April 4. She left Nebraska for Iraq with 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion in December 2007.

While overseas, Davey volunteered to help the 86th Combat Support Hospital from Fort Campbell, Ky., in Baghdad’s IBN Sina hospital. She originally was assigned to handle medical paperwork, but found herself doing much more.

And because they treated everyone at the sometimes-understaffed hospital, Davey found herself helping in her

original military occupational specialty: medic. Davey not only performed vital administrative tasks, but would “glove up,” help save lives, treat the wounded and respectfully care for the dead.

“99 percent of the time we knew what was coming and we would try and save everyone,” she said. “We treated everyone at that hospital... civilians, military and police.”

Davey said the majority of injuries were from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), shrapnel and incendiaries.

“There would be like six or seven people working to save one life and everyone had a job.”

At times Davey would help perform CPR, introduce intravenous fluid and run the blood transfusion machine, all while keeping up with the day to day paperwork. It was this exemplary dedication to patient care that earned her the respect of her peers, commanders and the “Angels of the Battlefield” award.

Curington said Davey “saw the worst of the worst” and “if we could only choose one, we would choose Specialist Davey.”

The 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion returned home in November 2008 and nominated Davey for the award shortly thereafter. On March 12, Davey and other medical



Photo courtesy of Sgt. Heather Davey

Angel of the Battlefield: Spc. Heather Davey, 110th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, meets Gen. David Petraeus during a March 12 banquet honoring this year’s “Angels of the Battlefield” recipients.

personnel from all branches of the service were honored in Washington, D.C., by keynote speaker Gen. David Petraeus.

“For me, the bottom line is that it is a total honor,” Davey said. “It’s hard to recognize everyone, but it turned my mission into a positive thing.”

Throughout the process Davey has remained humble, personi-

fying what it means to provide health care to the wounded and the ill, said Curington. She has remained the consummate professional, understanding the tireless and selfless acts Army medical personnel provide.

“The people I treated were the heroes,” Davey said. “They were the ones out fighting and giving their lives.”

Enlisted Soldiers Category



Spc. Shawn Schomer



Spc. Justin Eickmeier



Pvt. Craig Sholts



Spc. Matthew Lamb



Sgt. Nicholas Noel III

Nebraska Army
Best Warrior
COMPE



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Plotting His Course: Sgt. Michael Noyes Jr., Detachment 2, 754th Reconnaissance and Decontamination Company, plots his route during the land navigation portion of the Best Warrior Competition, held March 20-22 at Camp Ashland, Neb., and the Greenlief Training Site near Hastings, Neb.

BEST WARRIORS continued from page 1.

geant. A total of eight sergeants and six enlisted Soldiers competed in the contest after being selected by their battalion-level organizations.

Beginning with an early morning physical fitness test, the competition included such things as a written examination and 1,000-word essay, quizzes on the Soldiers' ability to perform common Soldier tasks, a day and land navigation course, a six-mile road march, M-16 rifle marksmanship matches and a combative wrestling tournament.

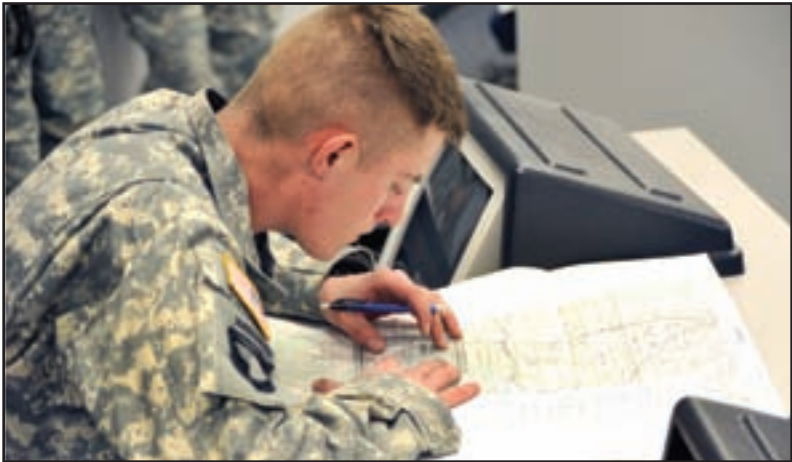
Finally, nearly 36-hours after they had begun, the Guard Soldiers had to stand at attention in their dress green uniforms and successfully answer questions put to them by a board of command sergeants majors and then recite either the NCO or Soldier Creed from memory.

When the dust had finally cleared, Sgt. Cody Trindle, a long range surveillance team leader with Beatrice's Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), had won the NCO competition while Spc. Matthew Lamb, an automated logistics specialist with Lincoln's 1167th Brigade Support Company, was named the top enlisted competitor.

According to Lamb, a 2005 graduate of Pope Pius X High School in Lincoln, Neb., who has been in the Guard for four years, the competition was extremely difficult.

"It was a very, very tough competition. There were some really great competitors out here and I think any one of them would've been deserving of this award," he said.

Trindle agreed. A 1996 gradu-



Map Reading Test: Spc. Matthew Lamb, 1167th Brigade Support Company, works to figure out the correct grid coordinates during a map reading test, March 20, at Camp Ashland. Lamb was the winner of the Enlisted Category of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition.

ate of Norfolk High School, Trindle is on his second stint in the Nebraska Army National Guard, serving in the organization from 1997-2001 before serving on active duty from 2001-06. He rejoined the Nebraska Army Guard last July.

"I thought the competition was extremely well run," said Trindle, who is currently serving a temporary assignment as a Nebraska Army Guard recruiter. "It was very demanding both physically as well as mentally."

"The competitors all did a great job," he added. "There was pretty much a dead heat tie between the three of us going into the final event. The competitors were great. These are some of the best Soldiers in Nebraska."

The Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition is part of an Army-sponsored competition in which Soldiers are graded on their ability to apply critical Army

skills and field craft while also being able to understand and explain the basic tenants of what it means to be a Soldier.

By winning the state competition, both Trindle and Lamb will now represent Nebraska in the Guard's Region V competition to be held at Camp Crowder, Mo., in late April and early May. Winners there will then compete in the All-Guard competition with hopes of representing the entire Army National Guard during the final All Army Competition scheduled for this summer.

According to Burch, the Nebraska competition was designed to be both a competitive and educational event.

"Our main intent here was to identify the best Soldier and the best NCO, but also to do our best to prepare the Soldiers and NCOs for moving forward and competing at the Region V level," Burch told the competitors during the awards ceremony. "We



Putting It All Together Again: Staff Sgt. David Dooley, Detachment 1, 18th Company, reassembles a machinegun. Competitors at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition were tested on a variety of warrior tasks including performing maintenance on a variety of weapons systems.

wanted to make it a learning event as well as a testing event... we think we accomplished that mission."

Even those who didn't win said they learned a tremendous amount during the competition.

"It's amazing," said Pvt. Craig Sholts, who, with just one year in the Guard was easily the youngest competitor at this year's event. He is a unit supply specialist with Omaha's 402nd Military Police Battalion.

"Being in such a short amount of time, it's just an extreme honor for my unit to send me to do something like this," said Sholts, shortly after completing a land navigation course through the thick woods at Camp Ashland's eastern training area. "It's been an extreme learning experience... a lot of things that I haven't been trained on or haven't done since I've been in, so it's been really fun

and a really neat experience."

Probably the most popular event of the entire competition came early on. Called a "Mystery Event" on the training schedule, the Soldiers did not have any idea what they were in for until they arrived at Camp Ashland's Memorial Hall, which had been transformed into a hand-to-hand combative arena with cushions laid out nearly wall-to-wall on the hall's main floor.

There, the enlisted Soldiers and NCOs were paired into a combative double elimination tournament, with five points awarded to the winner of each three-minute match.

According to one of the tournament's organizers, Staff Sgt. Steven Bails, a Level II Army combative training instructor, the event was designed to test the Soldiers' warrior instincts.

"Modern Army Combatives emphasizes to finish the fight

National Guard Warrior Competition

Noncommissioned Officers Category



Sgt. Tyson Gould



Staff Sgt. David Dooley



Sgt. Nicholas Benes



Sgt. Michael Noyes Jr.



Sgt. Cody Trindle



Sgt. Octavio Baeza



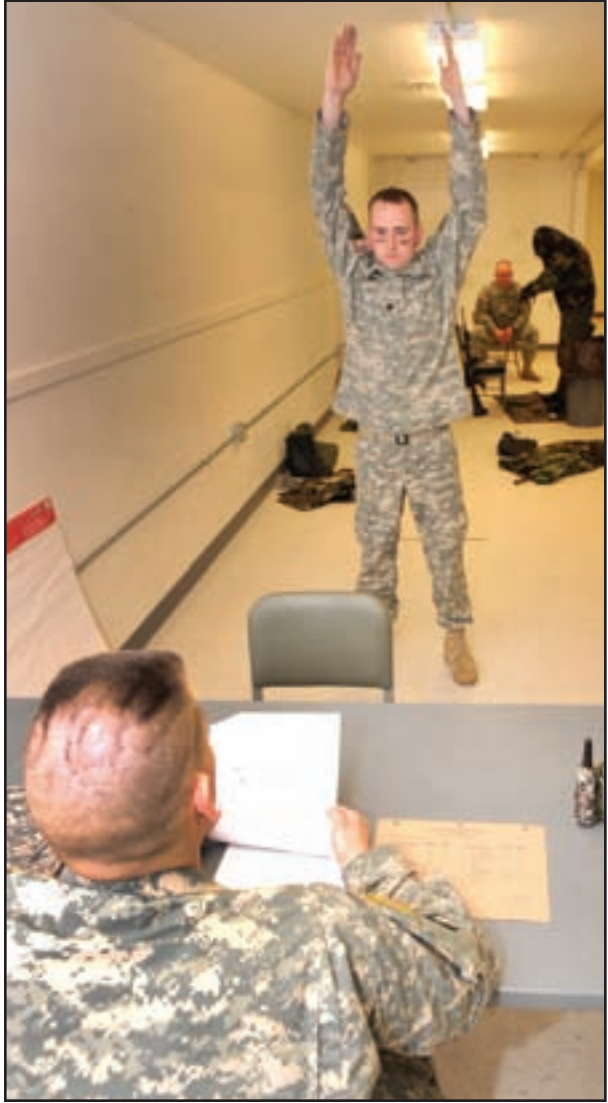
Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Sullivan



NowWhat? Sgt. Tyson Gould, Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company, tries to remember a critical step in reassembling a Mk-19 grenade launcher as Cadet Jason Teague grades his progress.



Battling For Points: Sgt. Nicholas Benes, Detachment 4, Company B, 935th Support Battalion, and Sgt. Tyson Gould, Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company, battle each other during the combative portion of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition.



Hand Signals: Spc. Shawn Schomer, 189th Transportation Company, demonstrates a hand signal used by infantrymen when moving on a patrol. Unlike years past, the current Best Warrior Competition is designed to test a Guard Soldier's knowledge of field craft, weapons maintenance, medical treatment, radio operations and survival in a chemical environment.



Steady Hands, Racing Nerves: Sgt. Cody Trindle, Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance,) demonstrates his ability to run an IV on a medical simulator under the ever-watchful eyes of Sgt. Bethany Luedke, a medic with the Nebraska Army Guard's 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance.) Trindle won the noncommissioned officer category of the Best Warrior Competition.

189th Transportation Company National Guard's demonstrating their ability to

— quickly,” Bails told the assembled Soldiers. “They stress that the winner of the fight is the guy who has his buddies show up first. They focus on finishing the fight quickly... you don’t want to end up fighting two people.” The key to winning the Camp Ashland tournament was relatively simple, said Bails. The competitors would maintain a kneeling stance while trying to pin their opponents with one of two holds. “We’re not here to hurt anybody,” he said. “Use your skills. Be calm. Stay active. Be aggressive, but don’t hurt anybody.” Winning the enlisted competition was Spc. Shawn Schomer, a truck driver with Norfolk’s 189th Transportation Company. He would ultimately end up as the enlisted runner-up to Lamb.

“It’s a good experience,” said Schomer, mid-way through the competition. “It’s going to help you overall in your career.” “It’s different. There’s a lot of stuff jammed packed together,” he added. Winning the enlisted combative tournament was definitely a highlight for Schomer. “I wrestled when I was in High School and when they said (each match would last) three minutes, I was like ‘Have you ever wrestled for minute?’” he said, laughing. “It was definitely interesting.” The NCO combative match also had a major impact in the final overall score. After winning the PT and written examination events, Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Sullivan, a small group leader

instructor with Camp Ashland’s 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute,) had established himself as a person to beat in the competition. However, in a semi-final match against Sgt. Octavio Baeza, a member of the 267th Ord. Co., Sullivan suffered a severely hyperextended big toe that forced him to withdraw from the competition. Baeza, who ultimately won the combative event after a heated match with Sgt. Michael Benes from the 1167th Brigade Support Company, was also forced to withdraw from the contest when he received a call that his wife had gone into labor later that afternoon. Overall, said Burch, this year’s competition was a success. “It was a pretty intense competition,” he said. “The competitors were tested from the start of day one through the end of day two.” Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, echoed those comments. “Of all the things we do in the Nebraska Army National Guard,

I judge this to be one of the top two or three,” said Kadavy during the awards ceremony. “I hope you thought it was challenging. I hope you thought there weren’t any corners cut in the running of the event.” The reasons, he said, are important in helping reinforce the fact that the Nebraska Army Guard is “a professional organization.” “We are professional warriors in the United States Army and it takes a few things to be professional warriors,” he said. “First, you have to have an ethos that you live by. You have to have a code of conduct that talks about how we live so we know the difference between right and wrong.” “And the third thing that you have to have are standards,” Kadavy added. “There were no standards cut here. You were held to the highest of standards... I think that speaks to the importance and to the quality of the Soldiers who are sitting here.” According to Lamb, who credited his victory back to his unit, which staged a mock one-day

competition at Camp Ashland a month earlier to help get him prepared for the event, he felt humbled to have won the competition. “I knew that I would represent myself and my unit well, but you never know how it’s going to shake down until you get here,” he said. “There are a lot of aspects or variables that go into it. You just go in hoping that you do the best that you can do... and I thought that I did that.” For Trindle, winning the competition was also an extremely gratifying experience. It was also eye-opening. “Competition like this breeds esprit-de-corps, a sense of team,” said Trindle, who added that his wife helped him by “pushing” him to study a variety of Army manuals. “Competition is what makes us better. It doesn’t let us rest on our laurels.” “I’m very proud of my unit, but I realized that there are good Soldiers in other units in the state... some really high caliber competitors and NCOs.”

CULTURAL ADVISOR

continued from page 1.

According to Aitmassaoud, a native of Marakesh, Morrocco, who came to the United States with his American wife in 2002, the idea of being a U.S. Soldier while also helping military leaders tackle the challenges of serving in places like Iraq and Afghanistan is something he is extremely proud to do.

“It seem like it just fits me, you know?” said Aitmassaoud in early March as he prepared to depart home for his training in Mississippi. “It was exactly the thing I was looking for.”

“I thought, ‘Why not use my culture, my language as a cultural advisor to help people...to help both sides,’ he said. “After going to school it seems so clear to me that the (language and cultural specialists) are not only translators or cultural advisors, they are more like peacemakers. They are more like that bridge between the two cultures.”

Cultural Specialist Program

According to Vidal, Nebraska gained the Cultural Specialist Program – better known by the Army’s O9L, or Oh-Nine-Lima, military occupational specialty—in March 2008. Other programs were also established in Florida, New York and the District of Columbia.

They joined California, Michigan and Texas as the only National Guard states offering the O9L program in the United States.

Vidal said the program is looking for a very special group of individuals who not only can translate Middle Eastern languages, but also have the ability to help American Soldiers and leaders better understand the culture their serving in.

“We don’t just focus on the language,” said Vidal. “We need their knowledge of the culture, their experience overseas.”

“That’s what is going to help us out.”

In order to qualify for the program, applicants must be between the ages of 18-42, be permanent residents of the United States and be physically fit. They must also be able to pass a battery of tests designed to determine their ability to speak the targeted language as well as English.

Based upon the results of those tests, applicants either move on to basic training or attend an English as a Second Language course at Fort Jackson, S.C.

After completing basic and AIT at Fort Jackson, S.C., Vidal said, applicants typically deploy overseas for a year and then return to the United States to work as a cultural liaison specialist for another year.

Based upon their current residency situation, language and cultural specialists also can earn their U.S. citizenship quicker than most other immigrants, said Vidal.

Journey to America

For Aitmassaoud, who is fluent in Arabic, French, English and some Spanish, the journey to becoming a U.S. Soldier began while he was growing up in Morrocco.

A former colony of both the French and Spanish, Aitmassaoud said Morrocco is much more cosmopolitan and accepting of western culture than similar Middle Eastern countries.

“Morrocco is more like the European style than any other Arabic country,” he said. “We

were colonized by the French for a while as well as by the Spanish, so we have that European background.”

“It makes us more open to the western culture,” he added.

Aitmassaoud met his Seattle-native wife over the internet. They were married in Morrocco in 2001.

“(My wife) wanted to stay in Morrocco. When she came over, she loved the place, the country and all the people, the culture,” he said. “At first she had that culture shock, but after that... she felt warmth in the culture. She loved it. She loved the food. She loved the people.”

As time went on, though, Aitmassaoud said his new wife soon found it hard to keep up with the new language. And, because she wasn’t fluent in Arabic or French, she couldn’t find a job. Friends, he said, were also hard to come by.

“She couldn’t keep up with that culture as much as she wanted,” said Aitmassaoud. “She started having these feeling that ‘I want to go back to the States.’”

Aitmassaoud said he supported his wife and, despite only being able to speak what he describes as ‘broken’ English, decided to uproot himself and move to America.

He said he didn’t feel any nervousness at the time, adding that he, like many Moroccans, was fascinated by the America they saw in movies and on television.

“We do love to see the American land,” he said, adding he was equally intrigued by America’s love of sports, big cars and even bigger buildings.

“We see Chicago, New York, Seattle, California...the big nice places in movies and documentaries on T.V.,” he said. “So that gives you the desire to go to the States. It gives you the bigger view of how the States look like.”

Arriving in New York City, however, was a shocking experience.

“The first 10 minutes when I stepped out of the airport – it was like, ‘Whoa, hold on a second. It’s fast,’” he recalled.

“Yellow cabs were running everywhere,” he added, saying that one of his traveling companions offered him some encouragement to help adjust. “Right after that, I just started adjusting to the culture.”

Aitmassaoud said he and his wife settled primarily in the Midwest, spending some time in Missouri and Iowa before finally moving to Omaha.

Along the way, Aitmassaoud said he took some college classes to learn more about his new country while also working as a store manager and at local hotels.

“Tried to better my life,” he said. “I worked with other companies... to get a better job history, to get know the culture a little better.

Aitmassaoud also developed a love of his new home.

“I love the Midwest,” Aitmassaoud said, smiling broadly. “Yes, there is snow and bad weather and stuff like that, but people – the people are very friendly and nice.”

“Yes, there isn’t much diversity here in the Midwest as in Seattle or New York or Chicago...(but) people are still very nice,” he said, adding that the people he has come in contact with have never made him feel like he was from a “Third World



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

On His Way: Spc. Najib Aitmassaoud, the first Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier to become a fully qualified language and cultural specialist, takes a few moments to pose for a photograph a week before mobilizing for Operation Iraqi Freedom. A native of Morrocco, Aitmassaoud joined the Nebraska Army National Guard under a program that will allow him to use his knowledge of Middle Eastern culture and language to assist American military leaders.

Country.” “If you open yourself up to people, people will open themselves up to you. That’s 100 percent correct.”

Aitmassaoud began studying Spanish. He also became a United States citizen.

Yet, he said he still felt that he could do more to accomplish bigger things in his life.

“I knew for a fact that there was something that I can use – my culture or my language – and make it work for me,” he said. “But somehow, I had to make that happen.”

Becoming a Guard Soldier

A few months ago Aitmassaoud heard about the Army’s O9L program from a friend. He said he was immediately intrigued.

His first stop was an Omaha U.S. Army Reserve recruiting office near a store where he’d shopped at in the past. Passing by a sign that beckoned him in Arabic to challenge himself as a U.S. Army Language and Cultural Specialist, Aitmassaoud opened the door and asked to see a recruiter.

He was disappointed with the reception he got. “I didn’t like the atmosphere. They would hardly talk to me, to be honest with you,” Aitmassaoud said. “For some reason, I didn’t feel the welcome atmosphere.”

“I was like, ‘You know, if these guys don’t want to talk to me or want to give me five minutes of their time to talk to me to get to know what I’m about, I don’t need them. I really don’t want to work with them,’” he said. “I didn’t feel comfortable, so I left.”

Thinking the opportunity had passed him by, Aitmassaoud had a conversation with a friend who worked at the Hilton Hotel in Omaha.

A member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, his friend recommended that he give Staff Sgt. Kirsten Jespersen, a Nebraska Army Guard recruiter stationed in Omaha, a call.

“So I called her and of course they were welcoming and nice,” he said. “They walked me through the process and they answered my questions, concerns, stuff like that.”

“I felt (like I was) worth a little something. I was like, ‘Alright, this is it. I’m up for this,’” he said. “I just went ahead and signed up. It was a good feeling.”

Aitmassaoud quickly passed the battery of physical and

language skill examinations and before long was off to basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C. He said it was an exhilarating experience.

“It was fun for me,” he said. “It was on the go all the time. I enjoyed the (physical training.) I enjoyed the shooting, enjoyed the marching...all that stuff.”

He said he was also a major source of curiosity among his fellow recruits.

“They were like, ‘They let you guys in the Army,’” said Aitmassaoud, laughing at the memory. “Yes, they let us in the Army. And besides, I am an American, so I have that right to join the U.S. Army.”

“They were shocked for a minute, but when you explain to them why you are here, they appreciate you even more,” he said. “They know that you are the person they will need to get them ready.”

Aitmassaoud said his fellow recruits were constantly peppering him with questions. How do you say this in Arabic? What can you do in these situations? Why do they do that?

It was like, he said, the Soldiers realized that here was a person who could give them the answers they would need when the deployed overseas in the near future.

“Some of them were very smart,” he said. “They took those five minutes to ask me questions.”

Aitmassaoud said he also gained a better insight into what it means to be a Soldier.

“We are translators and cultural advisors, but before that, we are Soldiers,” he said. “We wear the uniform, the flag... the only thing we have is that skill with that Arabic language or the culture. Other than that, we’re Soldiers.”

Following basic training, Aitmassaoud moved on to AIT where he and the other prospective language and cultural specialists learned more about the roles they will play overseas and about the regulations that govern their work.

They also gained real-world experience during field training exercises, which included a trip to the National Training Center in California where Aitmassaoud and the others worked with active duty Army officers preparing to deploy to Iraq.

“The training at Fort Jackson was fantastic. I loved the program. The teachers were very,

very good,” he said, adding that often it was hard to know what was training and what was real.

“It was very real,” he said. “I had to back up and think a second, ‘Dude, is it real or is it training?’”

After approximately eight weeks of training, Aitmassaoud, who was promoted to the rank of specialist when he enlisted, had completed training and was certified as a U.S. Army language and cultural specialist. He said it was an honor to be given the title.

“It was a good feeling,” he said. “You now knew that you have a responsibility more than anything else. Now you have to go do your job. This training and all that comes to an end. It’s the start of a new road and it’s an important job. It’s where you put your boots in the field and you do your job. That’s where you put your skills and language and your culture to work.”

New Responsibilities

Throughout the entire process, Aitmassaoud said his wife was constantly supportive of him. “She thinks it’s a good thing for us to move ahead... to open doors for us in the long run,” he said.

As a part of his enlistment, Aitmassaoud will now deploy overseas to Iraq for a year. He said he’s not nervous about the mission, but rather excited by the opportunity.

“I’m not nervous because I know that I speak the language,” he said, laughing. “It’s not like home 100 percent, but... you hear the language (and) you are in the culture you grew up in. It’s no biggie.”

“Iraq is safer now than it was before, so I’m not nervous at all,” he said. “I know that I’m going with the strongest Army in the world. It’s going to be a good experience...it’s going to be a really good experience and it’s going to help me with my resume.”

Aitmassaoud is also thinking about the long-term.

“So far, (joining the Guard) is not just a stop,” he said.

“I hope when I get back I will be able to go a lot farther than I am right now. I want to pay back the National Guard, the U.S. Army and the United States of America. I want to pay something back to this country and to pay something back to the people who have given their blood for this country.”

Irish luncheon focuses on art, culture

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

For about sixty minutes in early March, the Nebraska National Guard’s “Spirit of 1776” armory was transformed into an Irish pub – minus the alcoholic beverages – as the Nebraska Military Department hosted its annual Irish American Heritage Month Luncheon, March 4.

The luncheon was designed to give the employees a small taste of Irish food, dance and culture.



Jamison

“For me, Ireland is a complicated yet terribly lovely place,” said Dr. Brian Jamison, the Nebraska Military Department’s new command historian who has spent considerable time studying in England, Scotland and Ireland.

“Like anything, I think Irish character is developed from its own experiences,” said Jamison, who served as the emcee for the luncheon. “It’s been said that the Irish will sing at the drop of the hat, but they won’t talk if paid or under threat of pain.”

According to Jamison, Ireland has many positive aspects, as well as several negative ones. For instance, he said, the Irish pub scene is often the center of Irish society.

“Basically, what the pub scene is, is a meeting ground. It is a place where people discuss their common problems, a place where you can drown your sorrows... and other times it’s a place of celebration,” said Jamison.

Ireland is also known for its lush countryside, lively music, and its “affection for Americans and their overall respect for all cultures.”

“The reason for this, I think, stems from the fact that the Irish know hardships and it’s a lesson they haven’t forgotten,”



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Celebrating the Season: Three members of Lincoln Irish Dancers perform an Irish dance for attendees of the 2009 Irish American Heritage Month Luncheon, held March 4 at the “Spirit of 1776” armory in Lincoln. The dancers performed a number of dances to demonstrate the various forms of the Irish art.

said Jamison.

Among the negatives, said Jamison, are the “Victorian stereotype” brought about when Irish immigrants began settling in such places as Glasgow, London, Boston and New York City in the early 1700s. Jamison said this influx of people speaking different dialects of English created many stereotypes about Irish people that still live today.

Another negative aspect, said Jamison, has to do with the Irish Republican Army and the Ulster Volunteer Force that fought a bloody conflict for years. Much of that conflict, however, has ended in recent years, brought about the Irish peace process of the early 1990s and the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., on Sept. 11, 2001.

Still, religion and politics are still a

major taboo in much of Ireland.

“I would say that Ireland, like so many places, has its good, its bad, its positives and its negatives,” said Jamison. “Yet, I think if any of you have the opportunity to visit, you might experience some unexpected familiarity.”

“You may find that it becomes another home for you,” he added. “(The Irish) are definitely good for a welcome.”

Along with Jamison’s discussion, the luncheon also featured a demonstration by the Lincoln Irish Dancers, who demonstrated several different types of traditional Irish dancing including step, hard shoe and group dance.

The group also invited a number of attendees to try out a traditional group dance under the direction of the Irish Dancers.

Women made numerous contributions since earliest days of nation, speaker says

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

“Whether it’s a glass ceiling or a brass ceiling, it takes perseverance to break through.”

That’s the message Cheryl Zwart brought with her to the 2009 “Women’s History Month Celebration” luncheon, April 2, at the “Spirit of 1776” armory in Lincoln.

Speaking before a crowd of about 100 Nebraska Guardsmen, civilian employees and leaders from the local area, Zwart detailed the numerous contributions made by women throughout America’s history, primarily during the nation’s wars.

Zwart is currently a judicial clerk for the federal Magistrate Judge David L. Priester, a Trial Litigation instructor for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Law. Before that, she was a partner in the Knudsen, Berkheimer, Richardson and Endacott Law Firm.



Zwart

Zwart is married to Col. David Zwart, the United States Property and Fiscal Officer for the state of Nebraska.

According to Zwart, women have been serving the nation since the days of the colonies. For example, Zwart said, women played a major role during the battles of Lexington and Concord by helping uncover the British plans to capture hidden arms and rebel leaders, thus alerting the Massachusetts militia of the impending invasion.

Women would also make numerous contributions during the Revolutionary War by accompanying their husbands into the field, despite objections of such notables as Gen. George Washington who considered them a “distraction” that often slowed the Army when it was on the move. However, by the end of the Revolution, women had made such a major contribution that Washington recognized them as “Women of the Army,” a force that number between 10-20,000 members.”

Women would also make numerous contributions during the American Civil War, World War I and World War II, said Zwart. For example, Harriot Beecher Stowe would help mobilize northern sentiment against the evils of slavery by writing “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.”

Another woman – France’s Madame Marie Curie – would help discover radioactivity with her husband and then put that discovery into use by inventing portable X-Ray machines that were used to save lives on the battlefields of World War I.

By the end of World War II, said Zwart, between 400-500,000 American women were serving in uniform earning numerous distinctions. However by the mid-1950s many of those advances had become stagnated.

Today, many women serve in the military, said Zwart, adding that the Army recently promoted its first woman to the rank of four-star general. She said that despite the advances, today’s women owe much to those early females who refused to be “hidden in plain view.”

“The women I have talked about today steered their own course, made their own decisions, were not deterred by public criticism, were not paralyzed by indecision and were no longer willing to be hidden in full view,” said Zwart.

DIVERSITY continued from page 1.

This marked the second time that the Nebraska Air Guard has hosted a Diversity Champions Course in Nebraska.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Dallas Bartlett, 155th Air Refueling Wing human resources advisor, the 155th ARW first hosted a five-day course last July. Graduates from that course then nominated people from the 155th ARW, the 170th Group and the Joint Force Headquarter-Nebraska to attend the three-day course in March.

A total of 29 Airmen and one Soldier attended the most recent seminar, which was held at the Bellevue Welcome Center just outside of Offutt Air Force Base.

“Our ultimate goal is to create a positive culture,” said Bartlett. “Diversity is not a destination, it’s a journey – just like leadership.”

Bartlett said in today’s changing world, creating a team made up of people from different cultural backgrounds and belief systems will help allow the Nebraska Air National Guard to not only reflect the changing communities it represents, but have the wide-breadth of thoughts needed to make better decisions.

In order to foster this idea, the course focuses on helping individuals see how their actions – and inactions – affect the people they meet everyday. It also focuses on helping leaders learn how to better communicate with their teams while creating a positive environment.

And finally the seminar focuses on how diversity champions can help foster continued growth throughout their entire organization.

“Its introspective leadership with a diversity edge,” said Bartlett, who first attended the Diversity Champions seminar during his Human Resource Advisor training in April 2007. “That’s how I took it.”

“I’m a teacher (in civilian life) and I apply so many of these principles so often in class or in my FFA activities or just in how I carry myself,” he said.

In a nutshell, said Huttes, it’s definitely

a different approach to solving the continuing diversity puzzle.

“Anytime everybody has the same thought, you’re not going to get the best answer,” he said. “When you’ve got a wide range of ideas – and a lot of that comes from people from different cultures and backgrounds that can bring it all together – (then you’ll) come up with better ideas for the future.”

According to the most recent graduates of the course, the seminar was completely different than they expected.

“I specifically thought that it was going to be about race, about color,” said Tech. Sgt. Sharon Okra-Goll, an aviation resource management specialist with the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron. “I thought it would be how to deal with racial issues and how to deal with people and their racial backgrounds.”

What she actually encountered quickly changed that preconception.

“The first day totally blew that out the window,” she said. “It put me in an uncomfortable spot because I had already come here with a preconceived idea and notion of how the class was supposed to go and how it went in the past.”

“For me to come in here and take a look at myself and how I act... is it something that I want other people to see? Is it an image that I’m presenting that’s going to make me feel proud if somebody came back and made me accountable for it?” she said.

Okra-Goll said probably the biggest benefit of the course was that she was able to discuss issues with people and learn with them how to better tackle the challenges that the entire Air Guard is facing.

“The dynamics of this whole entire nation are changing and changing quickly,” she said. “We’re dealing with a more diverse group of people. There are more women in the work force. The minority populations are growing exponentially. There are handicapped people who are being recognized for doing things. There are different cultures

and ethnic groups.”

“Our world is changing and we have to change with it,” she added. “And in order to change with it, we need the tools. And this class offers those tools that we’re going to need to go forth and change with this nation.”

Okra-Goll wasn’t the only person “blown away” by the opening day of the course.

According to Staff Sgt. Lynn Babb, a command support staff specialist with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, she felt “emotionally ravaged” by the first day’s activities that included numerous activities designed to get the attendees to reflect inwards at themselves and the impact they have on their families, co-workers and the people they meet every day.

“Oh man, that was horrible,” said Babb about one particular activity. “I spent like that whole hour crying. It was very hard, but it was very encouraging at the same time because you are surrounded by people who are doing the same thing.”

“It seemed like that first day that I had a very good impression of the entire class. It made it better,” she added.

Both Air Guard sergeants said they felt they were both deeply impacted by the course. “I learned a lot about myself,” said Okra-Goll. “I learned some life-altering decisions, there’s not doubt about that.”

“I also learned a lot about other people and how they feel and what they’re thinking – kind of the good and the bad,” she said. “It was just life-changing.”

Babb agreed.

“It was eye-opening. You don’t realize the effects that your words, your actions and inactions can have on people. And sitting here with 29 other people who want to push themselves to be better people pushes you to be a better person,” said Babb. “It makes me want to be just like them.”

“People said it was life-changing, but you know, you hear those words, but until it actually happens to you, until you actually experience it, you don’t necessarily believe them.”

Sergeants get their day

Governor declares 2009 as ‘Year of NCO’ in Nebraska during capitol ceremony

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska State Capitol’s Warner Chamber was full of noncommissioned officers and visitors, March 11, to witness a noon ceremony during which Governor Dave Heineman proclaimed 2009 as the “Year of the NCO”.

With NCOs representing Army ranks from corporal to command sergeant major dressed in Class A uniforms standing behind the governor, Heineman said it’s a good time to thank today’s sergeants for all that they do.

“The United States military could not do its job without the hundreds and thousands of non-commissioned officers that we have in the military. We are very, very proud of these individuals,” Heineman said in opening the proclamation ceremony.

“We are very proud of these individuals and I was proud of



Congratulations: Gov. Dave Heineman shakes hands with Cpl. Traci Bach, 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, while greeting the eight Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers representing the Army’s noncommissioned officer ranks during the March 11 ceremony.

them while I was on active duty, to work with them everyday. They kept me out of trouble. One thing we learned at West Point was, whatever that non-commissioned officer said, as a young lieutenant you had better listen,” Heineman said.



Photos by David Nore

Standing With the Commander-In-Chief: Gov. Dave Heineman and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch stand on the floor of the State Capitol rotunda while holding the official signed document proclaiming 2009 as the “Year of the NCO” in Nebraska. Behind the two, eight Nebraska Soldiers representing the various U.S. Army noncommissioned officer ranks join nearly 100 other Guard NCOs for the historic photograph.

After reading the proclamation, the governor turned the proceedings over to Command Sgt. Major Richard Burch, senior enlisted advisor for the Nebraska Army National Guard.

“The first year of the NCO was announced in 1989 and the theme was just basically ‘The NCO.’ Now for the second time in 20 years, the Army again highlights the significance of its professionalism and professional enlisted force,” Burch said to the



Warner Chamber audience.

“Since 1775 the Army has set aside it’s NCOs from other enlisted Soldiers by distinctive insignia worn on the uniform,” Burch continued. In fact, he added, the United States NCO Corps has distinguished itself for 200 years as an extremely accomplished group of military

professionals. “We trust and empower our NCOs like no other Army in the world,” Burch said. “In fact many of the world’s armies are looking at our NCO Corps as a model for their own as they recognize the vital role of the NCO in their armies.”

The March ceremony is just one of many continued events programmed throughout the year to recognized NCO accomplishments, history and contribution to the greatest fighting force on earth.

Foamy Testing

■Officials check out new Grand Island aviation facility’s fire suppression system

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

How long does it take to fill a football field-sized helicopter hangar with six feet of sudsy foam?

Just a shade over two minutes, give or take a few seconds.

That’s what a few members of the Nebraska Army National Guard found out, April 6, when they gathered at the nearly complete Army Aviation Support Facility #2 in Grand Island to watch as officials from Viking Fire Protection tested the new facility’s fire suppression system.

According to Dale Wallman, state facilities construction manager, the test was designed to ensure that the new facility’s fire suppression system can rapidly put out a fire on the hangar floor before it can result in major damage.

The new \$18.7 million facility is expected to be completed in late May.

According to Maj. Kevin Bricker, AASF #2 commander, the facility will eventually house five Army Guard aviation units. He said the Soldiers are excited to move into the new facility after having worked out of temporary Grand Island airport hangar for the past few years.

“It’s going to be great,” said Bricker. “To be able to come over and have this type of facility available for us is, if nothing else, a great morale booster.”

AASF will eventually house up to six CH-47 Chinook helicopters and six light utility helicopters.



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Like a Room Full of Clouds: (Above) The Nebraska Army National Guard’s Aviation Support Facility #2’s massive football field-sized helicopter hangar is filled with six feet of soapy fire retardent foam after officials successfully tested the new aviation facility’s fire suppression system, April 6. The system can fill the hangar to the roof with foam, which has the consistency of washing machine detergent, in about three minutes.

Putting Out the Flames: (Right) One of three massive fire suppression foam generators begins to churn out water and foam during the first test of the new fire suppression system at Grand Island’s new Army Aviation Support Facility #2. Officials from Viking Fire Protection tested the system by lighting several fires on the hangar floor (lower, left) to see if the system could sense the smoke and begin administering the foam to the area. It took several tries before the system was determined to be successfully installed.



Maintenance unit receives state honors for efforts to raise diversity

By Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Brig. Gen. Timothy Kadavy, the adjutant general, presented the Nebraska National Guards’ first Excellence in Diversity award to the 267th Maintenance Company (Support Maintenance Company) at the Penteman Armory, March 8.

“This is one of the most fitting awards for this particular unit,” Kadavy said during the presentation. “A very diverse unit with about 200 Soldiers, ages from 18 to 55, both male and female, from about 20 different religious denominations and five different ethnic groups. The unit also has regular ongoing cultural classes and is very active and proactive within the community.”

The state award puts the unit in the running for the National Guard Bureau level Diversity award.

“This is an annual award at the National Guard Bureau level,” said LaVonne Rosenthal, Equal Opportunity Manager from the Special Emphasis Program Group. “For us this is the first time we have done this. The national award has been in existence for five years. We chose to have a competition at the state level.”

“This is the opportunity for commanders, Army and Air Force, to nominate individuals and units for this award,” said Rosenthal.

After receiving the award, the 267th Maintenance Co. first sergeant said the award reflects positively on the Soldiers of the unit.

“I think they ought to be extremely proud,” 1st Sgt Garry Miller said. “It showed that it doesn’t make any difference what their race, religion, background is, it doesn’t make any difference. The 267th will welcome them in, as well as any unit would. We were honored for what of what we have taken in already. It is an extreme honor”



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Charge! A swarm of children charge onto the National Guard air base mall in search of brightly colored plastic Easter Eggs filled with candy, March 21. Approximately 1,000 eggs were hidden on the grassy mall for the annual Easter Egg hunt.

On the Hunt

■ Guard kids enjoy weather during annual Easter Egg hunt

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Easter Bunny made an early journey to Nebraska for around 125 Nebraska Army and Air National Guard children, March 21. As part of the Nebraska National Guard Family Program’s annual Easter Egg Hunt, egg hunters of various sizes made quick work of the 1,000 brightly colored eggs that had been hidden on the Nebraska National Guard air base mall as they and their families enjoyed one of the first really nice days of the approaching spring. “It was just a fantastic day,” said Karen Jordan-Anderson, Nebraska Air National Guard family program coordinator who helped set up this year’s egg hunting event. “And the weather was just wonderful. In fact, it was probably too nice because the



Let’s Get This Hunt Started: Shelby Bethune, 1, and her brother William Bethune, 3, eye multi-colored plastic Easter Eggs as they prepare to start the Easter Egg Hunt, held March 21 in Lincoln, Neb. Approximately 125 military children attended.

chocolate in the eggs started melting.” “Who would’ve thought that we would’ve had such a nice day in mid-March,” she added. “The kids sure didn’t seem to mind the melted chocolate, either. They just had a great time.” Along with the annual Easter Egg Hunt, the Guard kids also got a chance to meet the Easter Bunny while also getting to stroke several pet rabbits that had been brought out to the base by members of the Rabbits R Us 4H Club,



He’s So Soft: Jake Yoder spends a few moments petting one of several rabbits brought out to the Nebraska National Guard air base by members of the Rabbits R Us 4H Club, one of a number of activities for military children that preceded the annual Easter Egg Hunt. The rabbits proved to be one of the most popular activities as many kids made repeated trips to the 4H tent to pet the rabbits before the start of the hunt.

a number of whom are students at Raymond Central High School. Guard families also had a chance to fill out a Family Program survey, which Jordan-Anderson said, was designed to help give state Family Program officials a chance to learn more about how they’re doing and what kinds of programs families are interested in. “It’s an important way of finding out how we can better serve the families of the state,” she said.

Ben Nelson receives National Guard award

WASHINGTON, D.C. (NGNEWS) – The National Guard’s highest award was presented to Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, March 23, for his leadership and support to Guard personnel. Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, the director of the Army National Guard, presented the Sonny Montgomery Award to Nelson for his leadership on the Fiscal Year 2009 National Defense Authorization Act, which led to the largest increase in Army National Guard full-time manning in more than 22 years. “He was instrumental in ensuring that increase was enacted,” said Col. Bill Hersh, the deputy director of operations for the National Guard Bureau’s legislative liaison office. Nelson said he was humbled by the

award. “As chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee, I take great pride in ensuring that our country delivers on its promises to our men and women in uniform,” he said. Additionally, he supported four other National Guard-initiated legislative proposals: •Controlled grades - Updates the limits by grade of full-time officers and senior enlisted members of the Army and Air National Guard in order to reduce delays in promotions in specified grades. •Unit vacancy promotions - Removes a barrier to promotion consideration of qualified National Guard officers ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation. •Dual-hat commanders - This change

in law would allow the President and a governor to consent to the appointment of an officer for “dual-hat” (state and federal) status in advance of actually taking command of forces and therefore guarantee continuity of command. •Increase age limit for chaplains and medical officers to 68. The award was established in 1996 in honor of Maj. Gen. G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery, a legendary advocate for the National Guard in Congress, whose support earned him the title “Mr. National Guard.” Montgomery served in the Mississippi Guard from 1946-1980 and retired as a major general. This award is intended to recognize those who have distinguished themselves by truly extraordinary na-

Volunteer Spotlight:

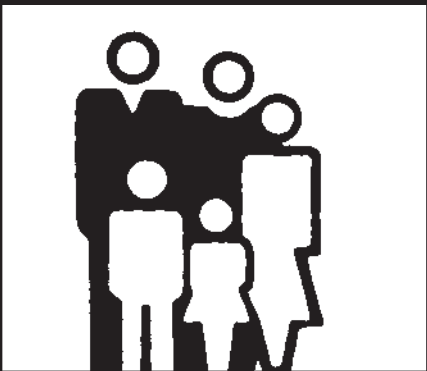
Cami West, Kearney

My name is Camie West and I am the Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader for the 1195th Transportation Company (TC). I am very proud and honored to serve my husband’s unit in this manner. I have been involved in FRG activities for many years and have always enjoyed the relationships that are built. With the 1195th needing FRG volunteers, and a little encouragement, I agreed to take on a leadership role. I already knew that an FRG is an asset and I believe that helping to lead one will be rewarding as well. I have thoroughly enjoyed the time I have been in this position (less than a year). I have the privilege of working with some other incredible individuals who help with our organization. I am looking forward to upcoming activities and getting to know the other family members (spouses, children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncle, etc.) better. My Soldier is 1st Sgt. Robert West. He has been in the Nebraska National Guard for 25 years. He works full time for the Nebraska National Guard at the Kearney Armory and he coaches the Elm Creek High School wrestling team. I teach seventh through twelfth grade special education at Elm Creek High School. We live in Elm Creek and have two children, Matt and Jeffrey. Matt is a senior and has recently joined the Nebraska National Guard. He will go to training this summer to become a combat medic. Jeffrey is a fifth grader. Our family has been through two mobilizations and one deployment. The first mobilization we have affectionately deemed “Operation Enduring Fort Riley” as the 734th Transportation Battalion was mobilized in 2003 and spent approximately three months at Fort Riley before having their mission cancelled and being sent home. The other was a deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom (again with the 734th) to Logistics Support Area (LSA) Anaconda, Iraq. His unit left in May 2006 and returned home in August 2007. Like all of you, we have been through many times without our Soldier being at home and the connection with other military families has been what has kept us afloat during these times... and I want to keep it that way. I am extremely honored to support my husband, the other Soldiers of his unit and the family members as the FRG leader for the 1195th TC. We are always looking for volunteers especially as we head toward the mobilization and deployment of the 1195th — calling all interested parents, spouses, brothers, sisters, grandparents, girlfriends, boyfriends, employers, etc. If you are interested please contact me at 308-856-4299 or camiwest@esu10.org.



Guard Honors: Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Kadvay, Nebraska adjutant general (left) and Lt. Gen. Clyde A. Vaughn, Army National Guard director (right) present the Gen. G. V. “Sonny” Montgomery Award to Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska March 23 at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

tional leadership, resulting in a stronger National Guard for America.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use



Red Cross providing over \$20,000 in funding for Health, Safety training

The Red Cross is supporting military families with more than \$20,000 in currently available Health and Safety Scholarship funds. This opportunity is for military families living in Nebraska, including National Guard, Reserves and active duty.

In an effort to provide support to military Families in Nebraska, several American Red Cross Chapters are offering scholarship funds for various Health and Safety courses.

The courses offered vary among the Red Cross Chapters and will be available until May 31, or until funding is exhausted.

The following are the participating Red Cross Chapters and contact information. Chapters can answer your questions about the Health and Safety scholarships:

Central Plains Chapter, Grand Island, Neb.
(308) 382-3790
Offering: CPR, First Aid and Babysitter training
*Will hold class for Family Readiness Groups in various locations.

Fort Kearney Chapter, Kearney, Neb.
(308)234-2770,
Offering: CPR/First Aid, Babysitter, Lifeguard training and Water Safety Instructor training

Heartland Chapter, Omaha
(402) 343-7700
Offutt Air Force Base
(402) 294-5032

Offering: CPR/First Aid, AED, and Babysitter training

Lincoln County Chapter, North Platte, Neb.
(308) 534-7350
Offering: CPR/First Aid, AED and Babysitter training

Northeast Nebraska Chapter, Wayne, Neb.
(402) 375-5209
Offering: CPR/First Aid/AED, Babysitter, Lifeguard and Water Safety Instructor training

Prairie Valley Chapter, Columbus, Neb.
(402) 564-8314
Offering: CPR/AED, First Aid and Babysitter training

Southeast Nebraska Chapter, Beatrice, Neb.
(402) 223-4211
Offering: CPR/First Aid/AED, Babysitter, Lifeguard and Water Safety Instructor training

Those interested need to contact the closest chapter for details as soon as possible. Those interested in setting up group training will have to coordinate with the servicing chapter.

The American Red Cross Chapters of Nebraska thanks you for your sacrifice, and are eager to provide services to military families in Nebraska.

Questions may also be addressed to Nick Farruggia, Service to Military Families for Nebraska manager.



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Honoring Nebraska's Military Kids: Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy (second from right) poses with Nebraska military kids shortly after proclaiming April as Month of the Military Child.

Military kids receive standing ovation at capitol ceremony

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nearly 15 children representing Nebraska's military kids received a standing ovation at the Nebraska capitol's historic Warner Chamber shortly after Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy proclaimed the month of April as the Month of the Military Child in Nebraska.

"I think we all need to remember that when our Soldiers have to leave and go into theater, their families have to stay and deal with the daily pressures," said Sheehy shortly after making the proclamation, which came on the heels of a hour-long ceremony honoring more than a dozen other state proclamations. "These families are also valiantly serving our state and nation."

"So I want to say thank you to these

families for their service," said Sheehy.

Among those standing in front of the Warner Chamber with the lieutenant governor were Dena Yllescas and her two children, Julia 7 and Eva, 1.

The two girls' father, Capt. Rob Yllescas, died Dec. 1 from injuries he received in Afghanistan on Oct. 28. A former Nebraska Army Guardsman who went on to become an active duty Army Ranger, Yllescas never regained consciousness.

According to Diane Shottenkirk, state youth program specialist, the proclamation was a small way of thanking the youngest members of the military team for their continuing sacrifices and service.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank our military children for their sacrifices and their support of the military."

Leaders should review Prevention, Response to Allegations of Sexual Assault checklist

By Maj. Drey Ihm

Sexual Assault Response coordinator

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program is a Nebraska Military Department program under AR 600-20, Chapter 8.

SARP reinforces the Army's commitment to eliminate incidents of sexual assault through a comprehensive policy that focuses on education, prevention, integrated victim support services, reporting, investigation, and appropriate action and follow-up.

The Defense Department (under AR 600-20 Chapter 8) mandates that each military member will receive their annual sexual assault awareness training through the organization's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program.

To schedule annual unit or agency training, please contact the duty appointed unit sexual assault coordinator or victim advocate.

Response to victims of sexual assault, both on the installation and in a deployed environment, requires the utilization of unit or organization victim advocates (UVA).

The training for UVAs occurs regularly and provides those Soldiers assigned to this collateral duty with comprehensive hands-on education in sexual assault victim advocacy.

The criteria commanders should use to select UVAs can be found within AR 600-20 Chapter 8, or by contacting the Joint Force Headquarters Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (JFHQ-SARC) at (402) 309-7198 or drey.ihm@ng.army.mil.

Victims of sexual assault have two reporting options afforded to them. Under the restricted/limited and unrestricted reporting, victims may receive services and advocacy on their behalf as well as obtain information on services.

What leaders can do to help support victims of sexual assault

The primary concern is to ensure the safety of the victim. Depending on the circumstances of the assault, safety concerns may have to be addressed.

Secondly, contact the JFHQ-SARC. They will assist in assigning a trained victim advocate who will inform the victim of his or her right and option to

have a victim advocate to accompany them and provide support during the process, which may include a forensic and medical examination, and the investigative and legal process.

Victim advocates may provide crisis intervention, referral and non-clinical support to include information on available options and resources.

Arrange for a victim advocate of the same sex or contact another trusted individual of the victim's choosing to accompany them to the medical examination, as applicable. A healthcare professional who has specialty training to examine victims of sexual assault administers the forensic evaluation and medical examination.

Ensure that the unit, command leadership and all responders know the required Sexual Assault Victim Response Protocols and processes and follow standard operating procedures based upon policy and directives.

The Nebraska Military Department has a basic checklist to help guide the commands' actions when addressing the needs of a sexual assault victim, the alleged offender and the

command at large.

The primary objective is to ensure the appropriate balance between a victim's rights and the alleged offender's right to due process under the law.

Leaders are strongly encouraged to review and familiarize themselves with the Commander's Checklist for the Prevention and Response to Allegations of Sexual Assault. This information can be found at www.neguard.com at the appropriate links.

When supporting victims, leaders also need to address the following issues:

- First and foremost, assure the physical safety for the victim;
- Activate or contact a Victim Advocate;
- Support the victim in contacting law enforcement;
- Try to determine the location of the alleged offender and report to law enforcement;
- Approach the victim in a supportive manner and reassure them you are there to help;
- Advise against the destruction of evidence (i.e. bathing or washing clothes) prior to the victim going to the medical facility;

- Assist with or provide transportation to a medical facility;
- Reinforce that the sexual assault was not the victim's fault;
- Listen to the victim's needs and issues;
- Engage in quiet support;
- Constant conversation is not necessary;
- Allow the victim to exercise as much control over their situation as possible;
- Emphasize to the victim the need and option for additional support; link to helping agencies;
- Advise the victim of available counseling, support groups and other victim services;
- Be available – be sure the victim can turn to you for support in the weeks and months following the assault.

Initial Victim Advocate training is a 40-hour course. There are dates available at the Professional Education Center located in North Little Rock, Ark. Refresher training will be conducted on April 26 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

Those interested in training are encouraged to contact their unit or Maj. Drey L. Ihm at (402) 309-7198 or drey.ihm@ng.army.mil for further information.



Carrison



Musick



Stara



Bingham

Best of the Best

Nebraska Air Guard taps four as year's top Airmen

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The Nebraska Air National Guard's top Airmen and Noncommissioned Officer for 2008 were announced in January by Chief Master Sgt. Barbara A. Gossage, state command chief master sergeant.

The organization's selections were:
♦Senior Airman Jonathon Carrison, 170th Operations Squadron, was named the Nebraska Air National Guard's Airman of the Year. Carrison is a veteran of multiple deployments to Iraq and Al Udeid, Qatar, where he performed operations intelligence analysis support.

He is also a recent distinguished graduate of the Airman Leadership School.

♦Tech. Sgt. Bradley Musick, 155th Air Refueling Wing, was named the Nebraska Air National Guard's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. An in-flight refueling specialist with 23 combat missions under his belt, Musick

has recently deployed to Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan.

He is also a recent graduate of the NCO Academy in-residence course.

♦Master Sgt. Loran Stara, 155th Maintenance Squadron, was named the Nebraska Air National Guard's First Sergeant of the Year. Among his accomplishments, Stara was noted for his "compassion for taking care of his Airmen and their families during illnesses and unfortunate deaths.

♦Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham, 170th Group, was named the Nebraska Air National Guard's Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. Bingham works at the Host Aviation Resource Management Office at Offutt Air Force Base, which is the largest such office in Air Combat Command.

"This totally integrated office handles 25 times more flight records than any other HARM office in the Air Force," according to Bingham's recommendation. He is also a veteran of multiple overseas deployments.

NCO continued from page 1.

tional Guard's SNCO of the year, Bingham will now compete in the Air Force's Airman of the Year competition.

Bingham is currently a full-time member of the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force where he works as the chief host aviation resource manager, overseeing the training records for aviators assigned to the 55th Wing. The 55th Wing is the largest wing in the entire Air Force.

At Offutt, Bingham is responsible for ensuring that pilots and crewmembers are current in all their required training and flying hours while also managing their flight records.

"We pretty much manage all aspects of their flying career," he said.

Bingham first joined the Air Force in 1995 as an operations resource manager. After assignments at Langley, Randolph and Scott Air Force Bases, Bingham joined the Missouri Air Guard's 131st Fighter Wing before taking an assignment with another Missouri Air Guard unit at Jefferson Barracks, Mo.

In 2005 he transferred to the Nebraska Air Guard to take the assignment at Offutt. He said he loves the challenges and pace of working at the 55th Wing.

"At a wing like Offutt, it is (a pretty big job)," said Bingham. "And at the 170th, we have more experienced crew members, so of course they have a lot more information because they've been flying a lot longer than the average person on the active duty side."

In winning the national honor, Bingham first was named the top SNCO in the 170th Group before interviewing for the state title just a day before departing on his current deployment.

This is Bingham's second deployment

since joining the 170th Group. A year ago, he served with a C-130 unit from Rhode Island at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

He is currently serving at his deployed location as an aviation resource manager, overseeing the flight records for about 140 aviators from eight different squadrons.

Bingham learned he had won the national award in early April when he received a phone call from Col. Daryl Bohac, who is also deployed

at the same location. Bohac informed Bingham that he needed to contact officials at the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Lincoln.

A few minutes later, Bingham said, he was told he had been named the Air National Guard Senior NCO of the year.

Since then, he has talked with numerous people including Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, the adjutant general for Nebraska, his local group commander and dozens of others who have stopped by to congratulate him on the award.

Bingham said he's been humbled by the experience.

"I think it says a lot about the people I'm having the chance to work with at both the 170th and the 155th (Air Refueling Wing)," he said. "You really can't achieve anything without a support system."

According to Kadavy, the entire state can be proud of Bingham.

"The Nebraska National Guard recruits and retains the highest quality individuals to be Airmen and Soldiers in our units," said Kadavy. "The selection of Master Sergeant Bingham as the Airman of the Year (Senior Grade) is validation of the quality of our force."

"We have great Airmen and Soldiers, and national recognition of this fact is very satisfying," Kadavy added.



Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham:
Air Guard Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

Offutt Group names four 'Outstanding Airmen for 2008'

By Leighton Michaelson
170th Group

The 170th Group recently announced the selection of their Outstanding Airmen of the Year (OAY) for 2008.

The 170th Group Competition included the following categories: Airman, Noncommissioned Officer, Senior NCO, Company Grade Officer and Field Grade Officer.

According to Col Mark White, 170th Group commander, the competition gives the organization to honor the Air Guardsmen who are making a tremendous impact at Offutt Air Force Base.

Field Grade Officer Category: Maj. Jason Ragone

Ragone leads the Intelligence Flight for the 170th Operations Support Squadron and also acts as the intelligence deputy flight commander for the 55th OSS at Offutt Air Force Base.

Ragone started his military career in 1995 as an enlisted intelligence operations specialist at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. In 1998, he was selected for officer training school and, upon graduation, entered officer intelligence training.

Ragone was then assigned to Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., where he participated in the first-ever use of the B-2 Stealth Bomber in Operation ALLIED FORCE and deployed in support of its use following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Ragone later served as the

intelligence flight commander for Air Force Space Command in Colorado where he deployed to Baghdad as part of the Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Center.

Ragone holds a master of Arts degree in Computer Resources and Information Management from Webster University and a bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from the University of Missouri (Kansas City).

He joined the 170th Group in 2004 and lives in the Bellevue area with his wife Debbie and three children Dawsen, Graysen and Ashleigh.

Company Grade Officer Category: Capt. Jennifer Leavitt

Leavitt hails from Verona, N.Y. She joined the Air Force as an enlisted intelligence analyst in 1993. Leavitt earned her commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in 2002.

After 12 years on active duty, Leavitt joined the Nebraska Air National Guard.

During her military career, Leavitt has served in a variety of leadership positions ranging from air tactics and political affairs, to force protection and reconnaissance operations.

Currently, she wears multiple hats at Offutt Air Force Base including the acting 170th Group director of staff, executive officer, unit deployment manager, resource advisor and intelligence officer.

Leavitt is a traditional, part-

time Guardsman with three years in the Nebraska Air National Guard.

She holds a bachelor of Science degree in Management from Bellevue University and currently lives in the Papillion area with her husband, Capt. Kevin Leavitt, who is assigned to U.S. Strategic Command.

The Leavitts have three children, Draven, Owen and Sarah.

Senior Noncommissioned Officer Category: Master Sgt. Tyrone Bingham

Bingham grew up in Hopkinsville, Ky., and later graduated from Oscoda High School in Michigan. From there he attended Ferris State University and graduated with a bachelor of Science degree in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations.

After graduating from college, Bingham joined the United States Air Force and was trained as an operations resource manager before being assigned to the 27th Fighter Squadron at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

In 1997, he was reassigned to the 375th Airlift Wing at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., as a scheduler in current operations.

Bingham left active duty in 1999 and became a member of the Missouri Air National Guard as an operations resource manager.

A former "Recruiter of the Year for Missouri," Bingham joined the Nebraska Air Guard's 170th Group in 2005 as part of the 55th Wing's Host

Aviation Resource Management Office. He supervises both active duty and Guard personnel supporting the 170th Group and 55th Wing.

Bingham has deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, and is currently deployed to the Central Command area of operations in support of the Global War on Terror.

Bingham is also busy with his involvement with local community volunteer organizations and his pursuit of a master's degree from Bellevue University.
Noncommissioned Officer Category: Staff Sgt. David Castilon

Castilon was born and raised in Buffalo, N.Y., where he attended Lewiston-Porter High School.

He joined the United States Air Force in 2000 and served as a security forces specialist at Offutt Air Force Base where he met his wife to be, Sunaree.

Following a four-year tour, Castilon joined the 170th Group where he cross-trained to become an airborne systems engineer (ASE). He recently graduated from the Certified Flight Instructor Course.

Volunteering on a regular basis, Castilon served on several deployments supporting both Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom as the lead ASE for Rivet Joint missions on the RC-135.

In addition to training and instructing new ASEs within the 97th Intelligence Squadron,

Castilon is also a physical fitness monitor for the 55th Wing and the 170th Group.

Castilon also enjoys volunteering for a number of groups including the Red Cross, VFW and 97th IS booster club.

He recently organized over 30 military and Guard volunteers to help the Open Door mission serve food and organize its warehouse facility.

Airman Category: Senior Airman Jonathan Carrison

Carrison (recently promoted to staff sergeant) was born in Oxford, England. He attended Altus High School in Altus, Okla., and graduated from Ralston High School in Ralston, Neb.

After graduating, he worked his way through college while attending the University of Nebraska at Omaha where he earned his bachelor's degree in Geography in 2001.

Carrison began his military career with the Nebraska Air National Guard as an operations intelligence analyst. He is currently working toward a master's degree in Intelligence Studies from the American Military University.

A frequent deployer, Carrison served in Southwest Asia for both the 55th Wing and the Joint Special Operations Command.

Carrison is extremely active in his community and church and also serves as a Cadet Honor Guard instructor for the Civil Air Patrol.

He currently lives in La Vista with his wife Vanessa. They are expecting their first child in May.



Carrison



Bingham



Leavitt



Castilon



Ragone

Readiness every individual's responsibility

During recent Yearly Training Briefs (YTBs) last month, many of our commanders listed physical fitness, duty military occupational specialty qualification and professional development (OES and NCOES) as key factors hindering unit readiness and training.

As Soldiers and Airmen move thru our organizations by enlistments, service obligations and retirement, there will always be a level of turbulence, but after eight years of war and mobilizations these should be somewhat mitigated.

However, they seem to be getting worse and can potentially become a significant drag on

our ability to provide ready and trained Soldiers, Airmen and units for either national defense or a state emergency needs.

We must work to improve our readiness in all these areas.

There will be state-wide organizational guidance and metrics coming out in the near future. But, I ask that each of you look in the mirror and ask am I ready...have done all I can do? As a Soldier or Airmen we each have an individual responsibility to ensure our own readiness.

As senior leaders we work each and every day to improve our readiness thru resourcing, training, equipping, maintenance and manning; but the key to readiness is the individual Soldier and Airmen. We will continue to focus and resource individual readiness, however, an individual's commitment to his or her readiness is just as critical. Every Soldier and Airmen must ruthlessly work towards ensuring their individual readiness, this is part of being a professional warrior.

As a warrior it is your responsibility to ensure you are ready

On Military Service

By Maj. Gen. Timothy Kadavy
Nebraska Adjutant General

when called to duty in support of our nation and state.

Every Soldier and Airmen should work to ensure they are ready physically, duty specialty qualified, meet the appropriate level of NCOES/OES, complete required functional training and is qualified on their individual weapon. These are the minimum requirements every service member should ensure they have met.

Soldiers and Airmen are the foundation upon which we build collective level proficiency and unit readiness. I understand this may require time away from families and employers, we will do everything we can to accommodate personal schedules, but this may not always be possible.

As we continue to move forward we will need all members of our organizations to ensure they are ready and reliable members. It is difficult to ensure units readiness without trained and ready warriors.

We will work to reduce barriers and ensure adequate resources and time are available to meet these basic Soldier and Airmen requirements.

I ask for your commitment as a professional warrior to help the Nebraska National Guard meet our readiness goal now and into the future. This is required to ensure "Always ready, Always there."

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Assignment in Nebraska to be remembered fondly

My hourglass as the state inspector general has run out. I will soon be taking a new assignment as an instructor at Fort Leavenworth in May.

My three years here in Nebraska have flown by. My wife and I came here with three children, but are leaving with four. So even though we may never live in Nebraska again, we will have strong ties to the state.

It was a great honor and pleasure serving with the Nebraska National Guard. My greatest joy in this position was assisting service men and women in correcting pay and bonus errors, assisting with misplaced awards and correcting injustices.

I enjoyed visiting every armory and meeting the personnel who run them. These Soldiers are the tip of the spear. They deal directly with the Soldiers and their issues.

Upon my return to active Army, I will tell the story of my experience with the Guard. I will tell of the professionalism and dedication of the Guard. It will include the sacrifices and accomplishment of the Guard personnel and their families.

In the end, I would be honored to serve with a Nebraska National Guard unit again.

The Inspector General section is in good hands as I transition with my replacement. Sgt. 1st Class Teresa Flynn, the assistant inspector general has 20 years of experience in the IG office and will provide the continuity needed as I transition.

My replacement is Lt. Col. Elizabeth Cisne. She is finishing up a tour as the Professor of Military Science at the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

She is familiar with the Nebraska National Guard and will continue to support the Soldiers, Airmen, retirees and civilians.

IG Voice

By Lt. Col. Owen McCauley
State Inspector General

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Moral compasses help leaders steer through turbulent environments

Listening to the daily news the last few months has been somewhat of a challenge.

It seems as though each day the media's headline story is something to do with how the economy is tanking.

They say it all started with the subprime mortgage loans and the shrinking housing industry.

We have been inundated with news about bailouts for the big banks and bailouts for the insurance industry. Billions of dollars have been given to the auto industry in an attempt to stop it from going bankrupt, even though we are told that bankruptcy may be the only option for General Motors. The Stock Market plunged downward resulting in many Americans losing their savings, while some investors have lost everything to a major financial Ponzi scam.

There has been a lot of finger pointing and blaming of Wall Street executives and leadership at all levels both private and public sectors.

I believe a major contributor to all these current problems in our population comes from a diminishing ability to reason ethically and live by a moral code.

Several years ago, I read "Why We Fight" by Dr. William Bennett. In his book he describes a responsibility for the American people to have the Moral Authority to lead the world through the tough times.

Last weekend I was reading through FM 6-22 "Army Leadership Competent, Confident, and Agile" and I found an interesting example that demonstrates how choices made reflect moral standards. Permit me to share with you an example of leader character, ethics and a moral standard as printed in FM 6-22 page 4-14.

what was happening. Told that the ground combat action was none of his business, Thompson took off and continued to circle the embattled area. When it became apparent to

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steve Weber
Nebraska Army National Guard
Command Chief Warrant Officer

Thompson that the American troops had now begun firing on more unarmed civilians, he landed his helicopter between the Soldiers and a group of ten villagers headed toward a homemade bomb shelter.

Thompson ordered his gunner to train his weapon on the approaching Soldiers and to fire if necessary. Then he personally coaxed the civilians out of the shelter and airlifted them to safety.

Thompson's immediate radio reports about what was happening triggered a cease-fire order that ultimately saved the lives of many more villagers.

Thompson's willingness to place himself in physical danger to do the right thing was a sterling example of personal and moral courage.

This great example of leader character is likely only one of thousands of similar situations that men and women of our military have faced.

Most of us in leadership positions today do not face the level of personal courage demonstrated by Warrant Officer Thompson during the My Lai massacre; however everyday leaders in our organization are faced with doing the right things for the right reasons all the time.

It's what the Army teaches us to do.

It's obvious to me that all of us in the Army National Guard need to continue to do what the Army has taught us when solving problems and making decisions regarding how to "do the right thing."

I would suggest that all of us in the military purposely challenge ourselves and ask the question: Are we doing the right thing ethically and morally?

America has come through economic downturns before and America will come through this one as well. It is my hope that during this road to economic recovery all Americans do some self reflection on ethics and morality.

As Americans we could better serve ourselves, our children and our grandchildren if we were to raise our level of moral consciousness.

Raising our level of moral and ethical behavior will result in a future that doesn't include bailouts, bankruptcies and lost retirements.

Warrant Officer Thompson at My Lai, Vietnam

On March 16, 1968, Warrant Officer Hugh C. Thompson Jr. and his two-man helicopter crew were on a reconnaissance mission over the village of My Lai, Republic of Vietnam. Thompson watched in horror as he saw an American Soldier shoot an injured Vietnamese child.

Minutes later, he observed more Soldiers advancing on a number of civilians in a ditch.

Suspecting possible reprisal shootings, Thompson landed his helicopter and questioned a young officer about



Attention Motorcycle Riders:

If you are a current member of the Nebraska National Guard, you are eligible for reimbursement if you attend the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Basic Rider's Course.

Nebraska Army and Air National Guard members, including non-dual status technicians, can receive an approved Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) Beginners Motorcycle Rider Course. Completion of the Basic Rider's Course is required to operate motorcycles on military installation and when off duty in accordance with National Guard Bureau policy and Department of Defense Instruction 6055.4.

The two- to three-day course (depending upon provider) includes classroom instruction and practical riding experience in a controlled setting. It is designed for beginners and re-entry riders above the age of 19. Once completed, the training allows riders to waive the Nebraska State motorcycle test for an operators license and may also qualify the participant for lower insurance premiums.

For approval to attend the course or more information, contact one of the following:

- ♦Traditional Army Guard Soldiers: Chief Warrant Officer John Geistlinger at john.geistlinger@us.army.mil or Sgt. 1st Class Michel Larrew at michel.larrew@us.army.mil. or (402) 309-1813. Additional information is available at www.neguard.com/resources/safety/
- ♦Traditional Air Guard Airmen: Senior Master Sgt. Scott Tontegode at scott.tontegode@ang.af.mil or (402) 309-1118.

Note: In order to be eligible for reimbursement, members must obtain approval prior to registering for this course.

AWARDS

Army National Guard
Legion of Merit

David C. Petersen

Bronze Star

Lt. Col. Anita K. W. Curington
Maj. Thaddeus D. Fineran
Chief Warrant Officer 3 John P. Ayers
Command Sgt. Maj. Donald F. Davi
Master Sgt. Bradley V. Anderson

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Rand Amundson
Maj. Michael P. Akins
Maj. Jan K. Behn
Maj. Gordon F. Bjorman
Maj. Kirk J. Ludlow
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Julianne M. Kenkel
Sgt. 1st Class Patrick J. Marik
Sgt. 1st Class Terry D. Rasmussen
Staff Sgt. Ronald S. Halsted

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Byron L. Diamond
Maj. Drey L. Ihm
Maj. Robert E. Miller
Capt. Scott R. Henrickson

Capt. Kevin L. Janousek
1st Lt. Kevin A. Beavers
1st Lt. Bernadette J. Brownclerk
1st Lt. Joseph Mangiameli Jr.
1st Lt. Rachel A. Manske
1st Lt. Carlos A. VanNurden
Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ronald M. Helton
Command Sgt. Maj. Leon D. Haith
Command Sgt. Maj. Randall E. Stucker
Sgt. Maj. Brian T. Folts
Sgt. Maj. Robert F. Morgan
Sgt. Maj. John D. Parfait
1st Sgt. Mark R. Bigham
Master Sgt. Mark A. Bailey
Master Sgt. Steven S. Burns
Master Sgt. Mark W. Carlson
Master Sgt. Robert L. McCrory
Sgt. 1st Class Carl K. Dehling
Sgt. 1st Class Monte A. Kerchal
Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Koehler
Sgt. 1st Class Shawn M. Kusek
Sgt. 1st Class Scott W. Langan
Sgt. 1st Class Kristine A. Loeck
Sgt. 1st Class Anthony J. Lopez
Sgt. 1st Class Mark J. Makovicka
Sgt. 1st Class Martin R. Misener
Sgt. 1st Class Rebecca J. Schiewe

Sgt. 1st Class Ronald K. Schroeder
Sgt. 1st Class David K. Waggoner
Sgt. 1st Class Pamela R. Whisenhunt
Staff Sgt. Lisa M. Almquist
Staff Sgt. Christofer J. Alt
Staff Sgt. Nevada W. Amack
Staff Sgt. Sean C. Bowden
Staff Sgt. Christopher G. Cox
Staff Sgt. Michael J. DeForge
Staff Sgt. Cassandra L. Dytrych
Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Hartman
Staff Sgt. Christina D. Howe
Staff Sgt. Bradley G. Huston
Staff Sgt. John Inthavong
Staff Sgt. Jennifer A. Luhr
Staff Sgt. Carrie L. Monismith
Staff Sgt. Christopher W. Morehouse
Staff Sgt. Sebastian C. Nastase
Staff Sgt. Clifford D. Poesneckner
Staff Sgt. Roger D. Ramos
Staff Sgt. Jeremy J. Rinehart
Staff Sgt. Ward N. Robinson
Staff Sgt. Ricky R. Ruth
Staff Sgt. Andrew K. Singsaas
Staff Sgt. John J. Walker
Staff Sgt. Michael B. Warrick
Staff Sgt. Jay L. Weitzel

Sgt. Ashley B. Asche
Sgt. Travis S. Garrett
Sgt. Ross A. Hartman
Sgt. Nora J. McGowen
Sgt. Chad L. Miller
Sgt. Ramail E. Preiksaitis
Sgt. Daniel J. Rocha
Sgt. Sara K. Wells
Sgt. James A. Wieting
Sgt. Jessica A. Zimbelman
Spc. Titus O. Abure
Spc. Jeffrey A. Alexander
Spc. Heather R. Davey
Spc. Cameron B. McPherson
Spc. Nicholas J. Mosel
Spc. Michael D. Rieke
Spc. Gary L. Sons

Army Achievement Medal

Capt. Bradley D. Wangler
Sgt. 1st Class Dale T. Alexander Jr.
Sgt. 1st Class Steven A. Bonk
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Jamison
Sgt. 1st Class John B. Jurgensen
Sgt. 1st Class Paul M. Kimble
Sgt. 1st Class James H. McKeehan
Sgt. 1st Class James C. Mendoza

Sgt. 1st Class Daniel W. Nastase
Sgt. 1st Class Christopher C. Roemig
Sgt. 1st Class Scott R. Stanley
Sgt. 1st Class David E. Strohhahn
Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell S. Taylor
Staff Sgt. Adam J. Borer
Staff Sgt. Robert L. Halmes
Staff Sgt. Corey A. Hiller
Staff Sgt. Larry C. Jackson
Staff Sgt. Kirsten L. Jespersen
Staff Sgt. Nicole D. Kordik
Staff Sgt. Karen R. Matheny
Staff Sgt. Colby L. McCoy
Staff Sgt. Jason W. Prieksat
Staff Sgt. Christopher I. Russell
Staff Sgt. Chad A. Schroetlin
Staff Sgt. Ryan E. Thompson
Staff Sgt. Jared S. Wiehn
Sgt. Ashley B. Asche
Sgt. Randall W. Barnason
Sgt. Brandon R. Gladwin
Sgt. Robert H. Hague
Sgt. Ross A. Hartman
Sgt. Christopher P. Herndon
Sgt. Amanda L. Hillgren
Sgt. Nathanael J. Rutter
Sgt. Michael R. Stephen

Spc. Justin M. Reavis

Nebraska National Guard
Legion of Merit

Col. David C. Petersen
Chief Warrant Officer 5 Thomas A. Dahlgren

Nebraska National Guard
Commendation Medal

Staff Sgt. Gregory F. Smith
Sgt. 1st Class Bonnie D. Frazier
Staff Sgt. Charles J. Ashcraft
Sgt. Jason A. Fleck

Nebraska National Guard
Individual Achievement Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Chad J. Adams
Sgt. 1st Class Terence G. Burns
Staff Sgt. Joshua S. McAtee
Staff Sgt. Kevin J. Burton
Staff Sgt. Maren C. Stewart
Sgt. Timothy N. McCaslin
Sgt. Justin R. Olson
Sgt. Cody A. Trindle
Spc. Anthony W. Noyes
Spc. Aaron M. Rockford
Spc. Zachary L. Wright
Pfc. Jason D. Carlson

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard
Brigadier General

David C. Petersen

Lieutenant Colonel

Kevin L. Garner

Major

Scott S. Geary
Samantha S. Keech
Eric T. Kremers
Benjamin P. York

Captain

John M. Heatley
Joseph Mangiameli Jr.
Thomas L. Traylor

First Lieutenant

Carrie A. Broders
Brandon S. Burton
William K. Ohlmeyer Jr.

Eric J. Sattleberg

Chief Warrant Officer Three

Mitch D. Anderson
Michael T. Harrell
Todd C. Sumovich

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Robert P. Davis
KC Sohl
Tollie H. Yoder

Master Sergeant

William B. Beiber
Daniel E. Fullerton
Shawn M. Griffith

Sergeant First Class

Melinda J. Gonzales

Staff Sergeant

Keith P. McDermott

Tonya S. Wagner

Sergeant

Kevin M. Hunter
James A. Teel

Specialist

Trevor T. Dredla
Luke E. Katz
Chelsea M. Olson
Tyler P. Potts

Private First Class

Evan M. Egger
Matthew R. Fiedler
Torey D. Helmick
Jonathon M. Higby
Christopher K. Lohman II
Micah S. Roberts
Anthony J. Sindelar
Jason W. Trumble
Joshua L. Wooge

Private Two

Cameron K. Hale
Adam L. Huryta
Alex B. Trueman

Air National Guard
Brigadier General

Jon F. Fago

Colonel

Edward A. Salmon Jr.

Chief Master Sergeant

Donald W. Wiemer

Senior Master Sergeant

Guy A. Boden
Craig A. Shrimpton

Master Sergeant

Rick L. Ehlers
Jeffrey B. Hart

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Chief Master Sgt. Robert J. Bergman
Sgt. Maj. Virgil L. Timblin
Staff Sgt. James L. Chase
Staff Sgt. Yancey D. Keiser
Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Penner
Sgt. Carol A. Miller

Air National Guard

Lt. Col. Ryan S. Spaulding
Senior Master Sgt. Gary R. Lierz
Senior Master Sgt. Thomas A. Reid
Master Sgt. Gary R. Foster

TAPS

Master Sgt. Robert L. Kelly
Sgt. 1st Class James R. Steffen
Pvt. James K. Treacle

Stacy M. Michaelsen
David B. Nelson

Technical Sergeant

Michael P. Alvarez
Steven E. Bolli
Joel T. Debauche
Kevin D. Fedon
Christopher W. Jobman
Cory C. O'Connor
Jeffrey R. Quick
Joshua M. Robertson
Michael R. Scott
Maxeen E. Smith

Staff Sergeant

Ryan Garbers

Senior Airman

Scott R. Gottsleben
Derek D. Myers
Shawn M. Patsios

Shorttakes

Nebraska National Guard officers receive stars

■Jon Fago becomes newest brigadier general in Nebraska Air National Guard

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Jon F. Fago became the Nebraska Air National Guard’s newest one-star general, March 7, when he was promoted to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony at the Nebraska National Guard air base.

Fago, a 1975 graduate of West Point Central Catholic High School in West Point, Neb., serves as the chief of staff for the Nebraska Air National Guard’s state headquarters and as the assistant joint forces component commander for Joint Headquarters, Nebraska National Guard. He is responsible for working with the Army and Air National Guard on trends and strategy to promote an integrated joint force team.

Fago’s wife Cindy, his parents Marilyn and Donald Fagot, his daughter Cassandra, and his son, Timothy, pinned the new one-star rank on Fago’s uniform before a crowd of approximately 100 friends, family and fellow Nebraska Guardsmen.

“This is a great day,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska who officiated over the promotion. “Any time you get to promote a deserving individual, it is the greatest thing; it is the most honorable thing that we get to do as military leaders.”

According to the new general, he owes a “huge” debt of gratitude to his family, friends and the Airmen he has served with during his career.

“As I look out today, I see my family and a lot of friends,” said Fago. “And as I stand before you today, I am definitely honored to be up here, which makes me very happy. But at the same time, I’m very humbled because of the fact that this exceeds all of my dreams of ever being a general officer in the U.S. Air Force.”

“It is all due to (your) support as family



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Promoted: Jon F. Fago receives his new stars as a brigadier general from his wife, Cindy, and mother, Marilyn Fagot, March 7, while Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy (far right) and the new general’s father, Donald Fagot (right) look on. Fago serves as the Nebraska Air National Guard chief of staff.

and friends,” he added. “Each one of you are here today because in some way you have touched my heart and have made me what I am today. And as I stand before you today, I feel like I am one of the luckiest guys in the world and I also feel like I am living the dream.”

Fago is a 1979 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo. Prior to assuming his present position in October 2008, Fago served as the 155th Air Refueling Wing vice commander from September 2005 until October 2008. He also recently completed a four-month deployment to the Combined Air Operations Center where he served as the director of Mobility Forces.

In civilian life, Brigadier General Fago is an international 767 captain with Delta Airlines, based out of Atlanta, Ga.

Fago and his wife Cindy live in Lincoln, Neb. Their son Timothy is currently attending the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, while their daughter Cassandra is attending the University of Kansas.

■David Petersen pins on stars as new Army National Guard brigadier general

By Maj. Kevin Hynes
Editor

David C. Petersen was promoted to brigadier general during a promotion ceremony held March 9 at the Nebraska Army National Guard’s “Spirit of 1776” armory in Lincoln, Neb.

According to Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska who presided over the ceremony that was attended by more than 100 friends, family members and fellow Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen, Petersen is well-deserving of the promotion.

“A great Soldier and a great Nebraskan,” said Kadavy about Petersen, who recently commanded the Nebraska Army National Guard’s 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, made up of approximately 700 Soldiers located in multiple communities across southeastern Nebraska. “He has commanded at multiple levels. He’s commanded at the company level. He’s commanded at an installation level and he’s commanded here at the brigade level.”

Petersen was recently selected to become an assistant commander of the 35th Infantry Division at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., said Kadavy, a role he is ready to take on.

“Dave represents us well and we’re excited to have him down there as an assistant division commander,” said Kadavy.

According to Petersen, whose wife, Karen, son Seth and daughter-in-law, Michara, helped place his new one-star rank insignia on his uniform, he is indebted to all the people he has worked with over his career, especially those who have helped create a Nebraska Army National Guard that is now a full member of the operational force.

“The people who are in the Guard



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes

New General: David C. Petersen is promoted to brigadier general by his wife, Karen, and Maj. Gen. Tim Kadavy, adjutant general for Nebraska, during a March 9 promotion ceremony in Lincoln. Petersen, recent commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, is the assistant 35th Infantry Division commander.

now are all just great Americans because we all know that we’re all getting ready to deploy again, no matter who you are,” said Petersen.

Petersen was born on April 16, 1952, in Superior, Neb. A 1971 graduate of Ruskin High School in Ruskin, Neb., Petersen was drafted into the U.S. Army in June 1972. He joined the Nebraska Army National Guard in March 1976 and earned his commission from the Nebraska State Officer Candidate School in May 1979.

Following a recent deployment to Afghanistan, Petersen became commander of the Guard’s 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and led the organization during its September deployment to Louisiana as part of the Hurricane Gustav relief effort, the largest out-of-state domestic relief operation in the history of the Nebraska National Guard.

Petersen and his wife, Karen, have two sons, Kaj and Seth; daughter-in-law Michara; and two granddaughters, Skylar and Antaras. The Petersens live in Lincoln.

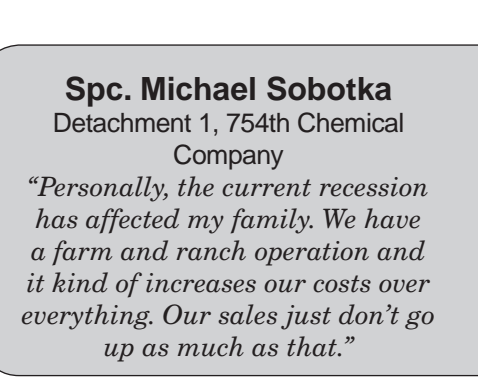
Street Talk

“How has the continuing economic recession affected you personally?”



Sgt. Dane McGinley
Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 168th Quartermaster Battalion

“I farm for a living so it has affected us pretty good. The prices of the crops are going down and with the cost of fuel and fertilizer going up, we’re having more of an input cost.”



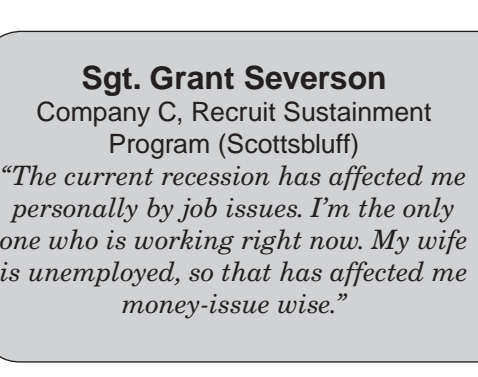
Spc. Michael Sobotka
Detachment 1, 754th Chemical Company

“Personally, the current recession has affected my family. We have a farm and ranch operation and it kind of increases our costs over everything. Our sales just don’t go up as much as that.”



Spc. Christopher Mitchell
Detachment 1, 754th Chemical Company

“The recession has affected me by having to pay more for the things that I already buy. I don’t understand that. In an already harsh time in society, why is raising the price beneficial to the economy?”



Sgt. Grant Severson
Company C, Recruit Sustainment Program (Scottsbluff)

“The current recession has affected me personally by job issues. I’m the only one who is working right now. My wife is unemployed, so that has affected me money-issue wise.”



Sgt. Shawn Sims
1074th Transportation Company

“It has affected me personally in my personal job. In my civilian job I’ve been kind of compromised. If I don’t get my (commercial drivers licence) I will be fired and they will be hiring a new person.”



Spc. Patrick Farrens Jr.
181st Fire Fighting Detachment

“I’ve lost one job and I’ve actually had to move back to South Dakota to find another job.”



Change in strategy, but our mission remains the same

The press has reported a great deal about a new strategy for our nation’s war against terrorists and extremists.

Much of the discussion has focused on the draw down of forces in Iraq and a surge in military forces and civilian expertise in Afghanistan, with increased engagement with Pakistan. Additionally, there is energy behind efforts to grow what is now referred to as Partner Capacity, essentially helping other countries develop the ability to help themselves and assume a greater role in regional stability around the world.

The strategy discussion has just begun and more will come out as plans are refined and details are determined.

So, what does that mean to the Nebraska National Guard? That is a question I get asked quite a bit as I travel around the state.

The answer is not much. Our mission remains the same...continue to build individual and unit readiness.

The immediate focus will continue to be on those individuals and units with alerts, notifications and AEF tasking. We have not received any orders or directions relieving us of current mobilization tasking, the guidance has been to continue on as directed. In the

The Adjutant General

Major General

Timothy J. Kadavy



long term, there will be relief as we draw down from Iraq, but the planned surge for Afghanistan and the reset/recovery of forces from the Iraq surge will take time.

In my view, this likely means no immediate relief in the near term.

I believe we will be asked to help with growing partner capacity through the National Guard’s State Partner Program. We could be involved in exchanges in leadership, professional development and areas where our subject matter expertise would provide critical impact to partner stability and growth. This is a moving target with more to follow in the future.

This means that the need for trained and ready Soldiers, Airmen and units will continue well into the future. It means our core mission is as critical now as it has been the past eight years.

We have made tremendous strides in improving readiness across the board, now is not the time to take a knee. We need to keep our eye on the target and institutionalize our gains and ensure our future readiness and

success.

It will not be easy and will continue to take energy, innovation and focus.

Actually, I believe it will get harder as our nation works to recover from the current economic crisis.

The crisis and changes in national priorities will mean less funding for the military in the future. We have already seen reductions in bonuses and ADOS funding for additional manpower support.

The good news is that we are positioned well to meet the challenges to readiness. Recruiting and retention continue to meet goals, strength is strong and through numerous initiatives we are working to gain relevant missions that will ensure additional funding for readiness. Ultimately, our success will be measured by our ability to provide trained and ready Soldiers, Airmen and units.

So really not much has changed. Our mission remains the same. We continue to need committed and dedicated leaders, Soldiers, Airmen and civilians all focused on readiness. We will need both individual and collective efforts to successfully meet our goals and missions now and into the future.

Thanks for serving your state and nation. We need you all now more than ever.

Diversity means harnessing National Guard’s inherent strengths to meet future’s challenges

When you’re blind-folded, you really don’t care who is in front of you leading or behind you following... all you care about is that they don’t run you into a wall.

That’s probably the biggest lesson I learned last month when I had an opportunity to attend a two-day “Diversity Champions” workshop in Bellevue, Neb.

If anything, it was an eye-opening experience.

We’ve all been told that the world is rapidly changing. And with it, the challenges we as an organization are facing are also changing. Needless to say, those changes are quickly coming at us in many different forms. Probably the biggest change, however, is coming in the form of the very work force that we depend upon daily to accomplish our missions and prepare for the future.

Today, more people of Latino, Asian and African-American descent are joining the work force in Nebraska. There, they are being joined by a growing proportion of women who are rapidly taking on senior management roles.

At the same time, more and more people are seeing their careers stretch out years longer than they had in the past, bringing this aging population of workers into direct contact with more young co-workers, who are bringing with them new ideas, new skills and new attitudes.

Like Nebraska – and America for that matter – the Nebraska National Guard is also changing. Simply look at a formation of Nebraska Soldiers or Airmen. Those formations are different than the ones we saw just barely a decade ago.

And, in a nutshell, that’s a good thing.

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



It’s now up to us to make it a great thing.

When I first started my career in the military nearly 23 years ago, one of the things I vividly remember was our annual diversity briefing. “Treat other people – especially those that look different than you – the same as you would want to be treated.” That typically seemed to be the message that was relayed to us.

But still, there was always this undercurrent about what they were really trying to tell us. Unfortunately all-too-often, open discussions about diversity seemed to degenerate into tense conversations about race relations, women in the workplace, stereotypes and many other topics.

At the same time, it seemed to me like there was always somebody, somewhere who was simply concerned about the ratios. As long as the ratios looked right, we could call ourselves a diverse organization.

The strange thing is, though, those briefings never seemed to go far enough. Granted, they were making us aware that the military was changing and that we were going to come in contact with people who didn’t look, talk or work like us, but they really didn’t give us the tools we needed to truly take advantage of these changing facts.

Over the past couple decades, though, that has changed. Today, there are many different courses, seminars and workshops designed to give members of the

military the tools they need to effectively harness the skills, ideas and capabilities of this diverse work force.

One of the popular sayings going around today is that ‘Diversity isn’t about counting

heads, it’s about making heads count.’ While that may sound a little jingoistic, there really is a sense of truth buried in there.

Today’s leaders in the Nebraska National Guard are now faced with an interesting challenge. With the continuing commitments around the globe, we are now a much more globalistic organization than we’ve ever been.

However, to fully meet the challenges that this new reality presents, we must make sure that we are fully utilizing each and every member of our ranks to their fullest ability.

That means giving each member of this organization the opportunity to learn and grow, to contribute and achieve, and to express his or her ideas to help us better understand the changing world we now find ourselves in.

As a part of the March workshop, which is part of an Air National Guard-wide initiative, the participants were blindfolded and then led through a series of obstacles by an unseen leader.

As one of those people blindfolded, I really didn’t care who was leading me. All I cared about was that they were competent enough to keep me from getting hurt.

Today – especially today – we have to depend upon every single member of our organization to get the job done the right time the first time. It’s not just a nice thing to do, it’s really the only thing to do.

If we don’t, we are simply putting ourselves and our organization at a risk that is simply too high to contemplate.

Golden Patriot

New Guard Soldier uses newly-earned mental focus to win state wrestling title

By Maj. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Most people join the Nebraska National Guard hoping to one day make their mark as a patriot.

Eighteen-year-old Nicholas D. Lonowski doesn't have to worry about that, though. He has already made his mark as a patriot just as his National Guard career is getting started.

Lonowski is a senior at Adams Central High School near Hastings, Neb. He is also a four-year member of the Adams Central High School Patriots wrestling team, where he just completed a career in which he set seven school records while compiling a record of 151-31.

Capping that senior season was a gold medal performance during the Nebraska State Wrestling Tournament in February where Lonowski won the Class B 152-pound division by pinning Seth Kubic of Auburn High School in 3:23.

According to Lonowski, the victory was something that he'd striven for since he started wrestling as a tiny boy barely able to roll around a wrestling mat.

"I'd always dream about it," said Lonowski about becoming an eventual state wrestling champion. "I knew it was possible, but I just thought it would be pretty rare for that to happen."

To win a state gold medal is a pretty rare achievement for any athlete. What makes Lonowski's story different than most, though, is how he got to this point.

This past summer, after finishing third at last year's state wrestling meet in the Class B 145-pound division, Lonowski shipped off for basic training. That was a radical change for Lonowski who had spent much of his previous 14 summers attending wrestling camps in preparation for upcoming seasons.

Fortunately, Lonowski's wrestling coach didn't see a problem for the young grappler taking a break from his normal training routine. That's because Lonowski was actually, in a way, following in the footsteps of his coach.

Dan Lonowski, Nicholas' father, is also the Adams Central Wrestling coach and a lieutenant colonel in the Nebraska Army National Guard. According to the younger Lonowski, joining the military—especially the Nebraska Army National Guard—just seemed like something he was always "going to do," just like wrestling.

"Since my dad was in (the Guard) it was just something I figured that I was going to do," he said. "Especially with all the college benefits... that's huge."

"But even if they didn't have the college benefits, I probably would've joined," he added. "I've always kind of been proud of our country."

According to the elder Lonowski, who works in the state training office in Lincoln as a traditional, part-time Guard officer, his son always seemed intrigued about the Guard.

"Since Kindergarten he has used an old Army cadence to fall asleep to," said Dan.

Lonowski said when he began thinking about joining the Nebraska Army Guard, his father encouraged him.

"He gave me that typical Guardsman's answer about it being the best choice you'll ever make," Lonowski said.

After meeting with a local Army Guard recruiter, Lonowski said he examined each job that was available before deciding to join Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance,) in Beatrice as an airborne infantryman. (It seemed like when I was picking my (military occupational specialty) they're the most high-speed," Lonowski said. "And when I looked at all the MOSs, there just wasn't anything that appealed to me like infantry did.")

As he prepared to depart for his 12-week basic infantry training at Fort Benning, Ga., Lonowski said his father—who also started his career in the Nebraska Army Guard as an infantryman—had some simple words of advice.

"Don't mess up," said Lonowski, laugh-



Photos by Maj. Kevin Hynes

Proud Patriot: Pvt. Nicholas Lonowski, a member of Company C, 1-134th Infantry (Long Range Surveillance,) shows off the gold medal he won at the 2009 Nebraska State Wrestling Tournament.

ing as he remembered the conversation. "He also said to try not to stand out."

Lonowski said his father also seemed to believe that attending basic training would do him good. "He knew that basic training would be just as tough as any wrestling camp that I would do," he said.

After a long summer of learning how to be a Soldier, Lonowski finally returned back to Nebraska in time for his senior year of high school. His father said he saw a major change in his son when he returned from basic training.

"Basic training was the best decision he could make," Dan said, adding that after 12 weeks at Fort Benning—"What Nick referred to as an extended wrestling camp"—his son returned weighing 175 pounds.

More important than the physical change, though, Dan said, was his son's new demeanor.

"After basic training, Nick's attitude toward everything had changed," he said. "He was more responsible at home, treated his siblings better and showed more respect to others."

Lonowski said basic training gave him the mental skills he had always needed.

"Basic training helped me prepare not so much physically as it did mentally," he said. "The biggest thing in wrestling is mat time and experience, and I really didn't get that. But the mental focus at basic training... that just helped me through the whole season."

"It kind of put things in perspective more," he added.

For example, Lonowski said he suddenly realized that each individual wrestling match wasn't as big as the pursuit of the overall goal: winning gold at state.



Hard to Believe it's Over: Pvt. Nicholas Lonowski leans against an Adams Central mat during a break from school in April. Lonowski, who set seven school records in wrestling, credits the training he received at basic training for helping him win a state gold medal at this year.

"Really, I didn't see wrestling as nearly as important," he said. "Last year, every time I lost I would just be devastated and always be down on myself after a loss."

"This year, I lost five times and every time I was like, whatever... this match isn't that important. It's not state yet."

Coach Lonowski said that change in focus was the missing piece for his son.

"Nick has been wrestling since he was four years old," he said. "As a young wrestler, he was a student of the sport. He would intently watch older kids wrestle and then he would come home and ask me about the moves he saw."

"Soon after, we would be on the carpet going over a new technique," Dan said.

The elder Lonowski noticed the changes in his son's wrestling focus almost immediately. Arriving home heavier than he'd been before, Lonowski chose to skip his senior football season so he could concentrate on preparing for the upcoming wrestling season.

"He slowly and gradually dropped down to 159 pounds," Dan said. "He dieted to 152 pounds at the beginning of the wrestling season."

"During wrestling season, he worked out three times a day. He would run and lift before school from 6:45 – 7:30. During his P.E. class he would run on the elliptical training for one-half hour. Then he would go to wrestling practice from 3:30 – 5:30 after school," Dan said. "Often times, he would stay after practice and wrestle extra or do sit-ups and push-ups."

According to Dan, his son also became an even more visible leader this year after being voted the team's outstanding wrestler after his sophomore and junior

seasons (something he would also receive again after this season.)

"On our team runs, Nick would call out cadence," Dan said. "Though the team couldn't stay in step, they stayed in unison when they 'jodied.'"

After working hard throughout the season, Lonowski again qualified for the state meet – his fourth qualification in four years. It was now time to put everything on the mat and show what he could do.

Lonowski said wrestling at the State Tournament is a strange experience.

"It's pretty intense when you're not wrestling, but once you step on that mat you just block everything out and it's just like any other match."

Except that this tournament was the one that he most wanted to win. This was the thing that he had written on a tiny piece of cardboard when his teammates were assigned to write down their season's goals at the beginning of the year. Lonowski's said simply: "Take first at state."

"Really, if you don't take first – taking second really isn't much better than taking third," said Lonowski, referring to his junior year finish at the State Tournament. "Gold is what you want."

Lonowski's run through the state tournament would definitely be something for the books. In the first round, he pinned Nate Stene from Benning High School in 3:32. In the second round, he defeated Holdrege's Jacob Woodside, 15-3. In the semi-finals he defeated Cole Washburn of Ashland-Greenwood, 16-0.

"It seemed like this year and last year I wrestled my best meet at State," said Lonowski, before adding with a smile, "I guess that's a good time to wrestle it."

After pinning his final opponent in the championship match, Lonowski said he could hardly believe he had finally accomplished his goal.

"It was just like a big weight off my shoulders," he said, adding that memories of all the wrestling camps he had gone to instead of playing with his friends, all the other sacrifices he had made to get to this point came flooding through his mind.

Congratulating him with a huge hug after the match was his coach and dad.

"He said, 'It finally paid off... all those wrestling camps we went to when I was younger and all the meets that I've been going to.'"

Probably the most special part of the entire experience, said Lonowski, was being able to participate in the annual "March of Champions," during which each of the tournament's gold medalists are introduced to the huge Omaha Qwest Center crowd.

"I got more goose bumps than I ever had had in my life," said Lonowski. "Then 'We Are The Champions' came on and I was covered with goose bumps. I just had chills running up and down my spine. It was fun."

In early April Lonowski stood on a deserted wrestling mat watching as other Adams Central High School students ran up and down a nearby basketball court as part of their physical education class. Other students were busy working out in the school's weight room.

Lonowski said it's still hard, several months later, to realize that his wrestling career is now over.

"It's really weird to think that I'll never wrestle again," said Lonowski, who helped lead his team to a fourth-place finish at state. He plans to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln after he returns from his advanced individual training later this year to possibly pursue an education degree.

"I guess that's why I kind of want to get into education... so that I can become a coach or something," he said, adding that he's also looking forward to experiencing jumping out of an airplane for the first time as a paratrooper.

Other than that? We'll just see, said Lonowski.

"I really don't know right now," he said. "I'm just going to live it as it comes, I guess."